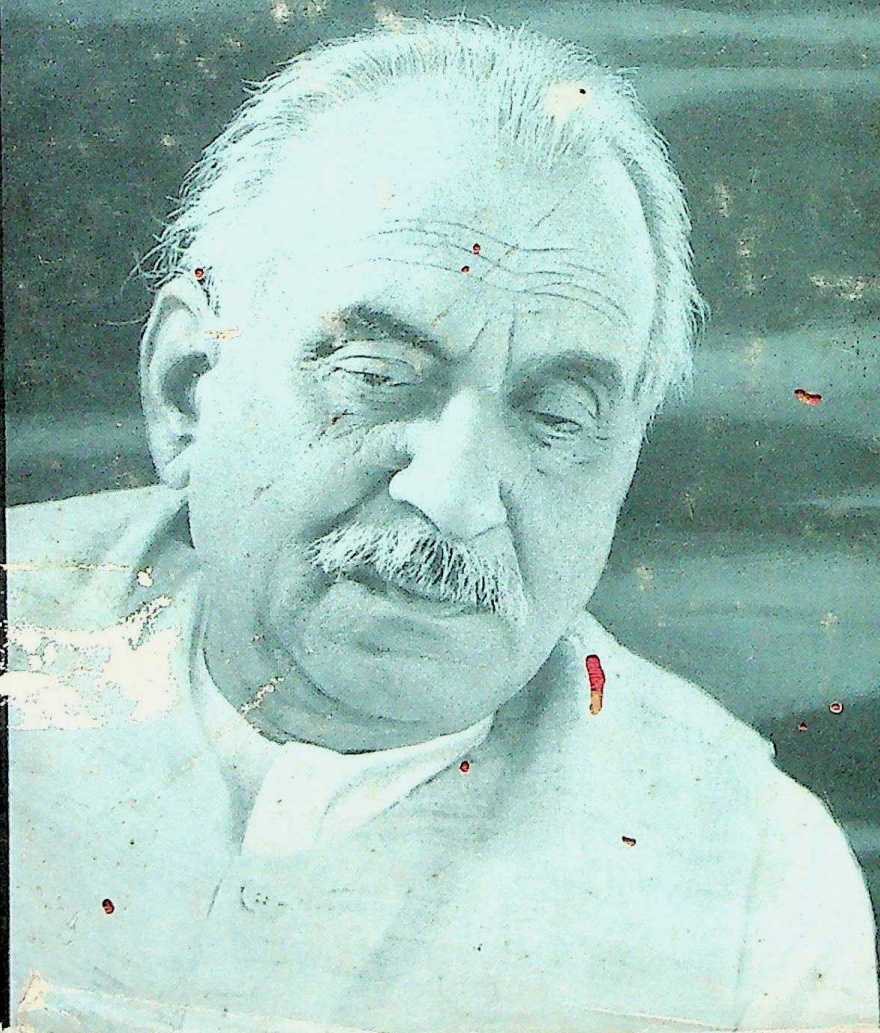
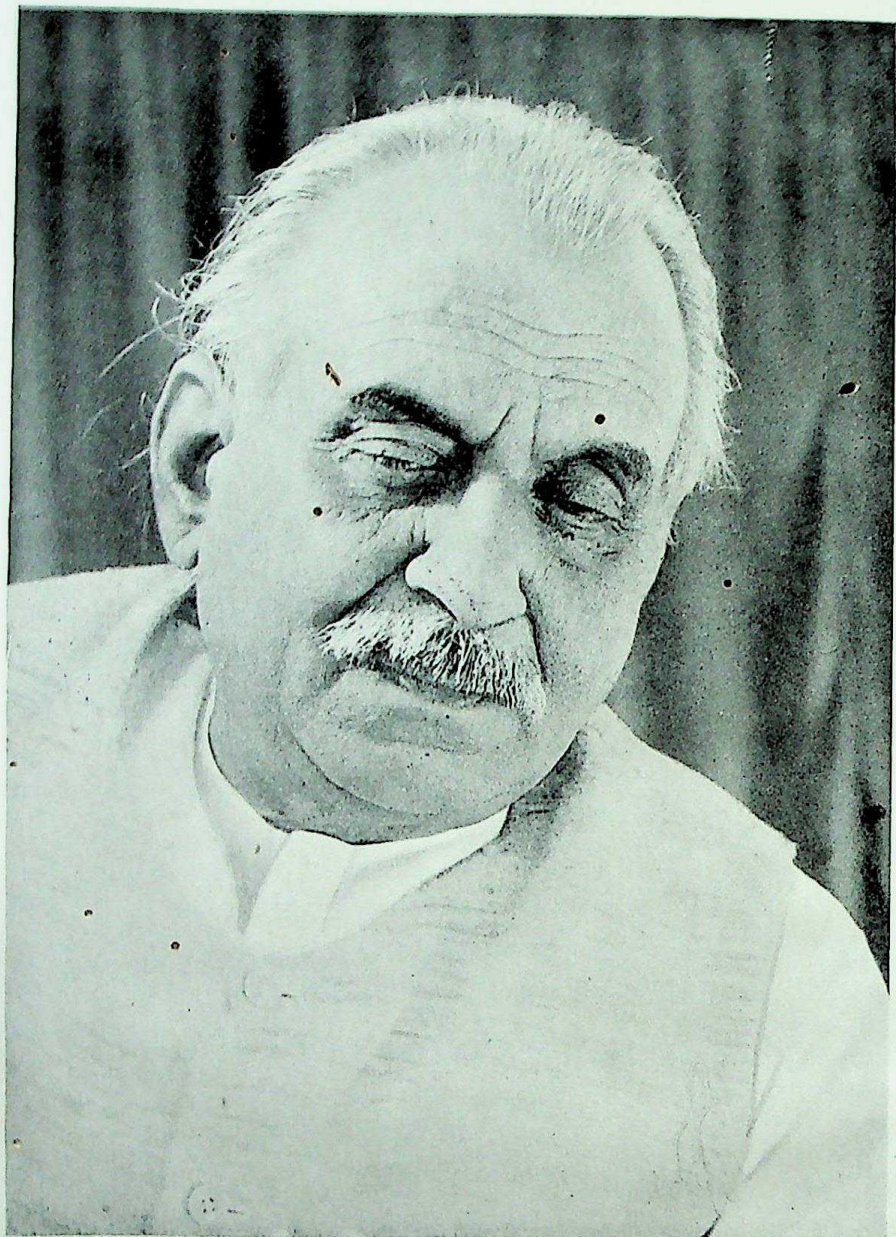


MEMORIES & REFLECTIONS SAMPURNANAND



MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS



Memories and Reflections

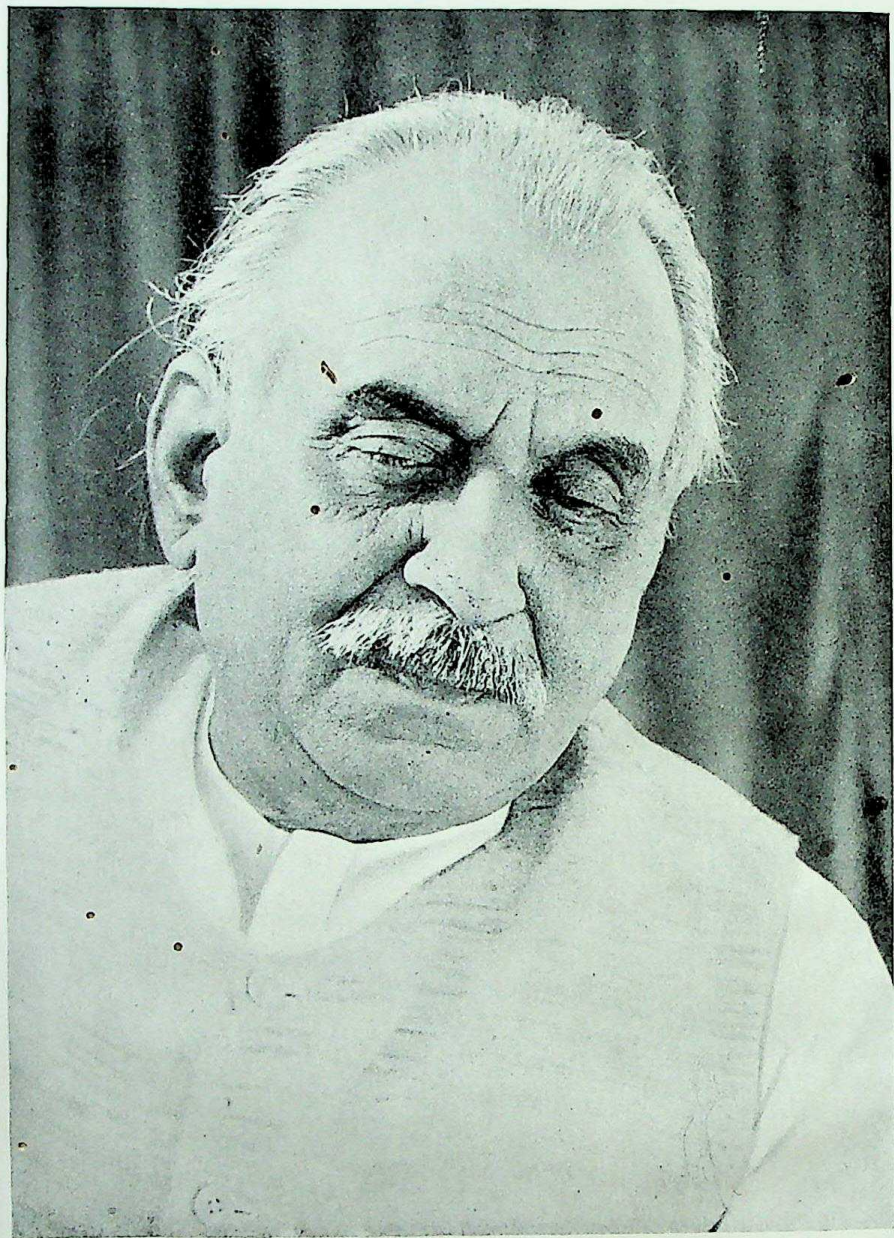
SAMPURNANAND



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Memories and Reflections

SAMPURNANAND



ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
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1962

PRINTED IN INDIA

BY PYARELAL SAH, AT THE TIMES OF INDIA PRESS,
BOMBAY, AND PUBLISHED BY P. S. JAYASINGHE,
ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, BOMBAY 1

PREFACE

THIS BOOK is not an Autobiography. In the first place, I am not sure that I could write such a book if I made the attempt. In the second, it has been my endeavour to avoid details about my personal and domestic life as far as possible. Complete avoidance was not possible. A man is made by his early bringing up, the cultural and socio-economic environment in which he works and the experiences, spiritual and otherwise, through which he has passed. To avoid all reference to these things would be to leave out the key to an understanding of his life-work, — his activities in the field of politics and literature. I have tried, however, to confine myself to the barest minimum.

It might well be asked why these memoirs, memories as I have called them, should have been written at all. So many of our great leaders have written their memoirs, under one name or another, which throw a flood of light on the history of the last sixty years, to which I can hardly be expected to add anything of value. In a way, this is right. But I am sure the true historian will agree that it is not only the record of the thoughts, words and actions of great leaders which can give a complete picture of the times in which they lived. It is with this idea in mind that I have drawn upon my memory to write down the pages which follow. I look upon myself as a representative of a fairly large number of workers of the second rank. My experiences, my thoughts and my feelings were, I am sure, shared by a large number of workers in the country, certainly in Uttar Pradesh. We carried out orders received from above faithfully according to our lights and held positions of trust and responsibility during the momentous years between 1921 and 1945 and, later, in the governance of the country after the achievement of independence. We had our own trials to face and decisions of vital importance to take in our own humble spheres. After all, the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link. That the chain did not snap

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shows that our satisfaction at our having performed our duty honestly and, on the whole, well is not without justification. I realize that the record would be complete only if one could go further down and look at things with the eyes of workers lower down the scale. It was they on whom fell the brunt of the battle. In the meantime, however, the memories of men like myself might help to fill in some of the blanks.

It is not my purpose to write a history of the times. Many important events like Mahatmaji's fasts, the great Bengal famine and the Bihar earthquake, have not been mentioned at all. I have, as a rule, limited myself to those events in which I took some part, howsoever humble. It is only in these cases that I can give my personal recollections. There are some important exceptions to the general rule, the Partition of India, for instance. These were events which stirred the country to its depths. Their repercussions are being felt even today. It will also be noted that the strictly chronological order of events has not been followed in some cases. It appeared easier to give a complete picture in this way.

Naturally, a book like this cannot be a dry catalogue of events. It has to be interspersed throughout with the writer's reactions and personal opinions. But the last four chapters contain my own reflections, my personal views, on a variety of subjects of public interest. I have been expressing these opinions for years on the platform and in the Press and have acquired some notoriety in the process, some of them being highly unorthodox, in the sense that they run contrary to the views held by some of our greatest leaders. This applies to my fads also, to some of which I have referred in the last chapter. I can only say that so far as my views go, I stand unrepentant. My hope is that my criticisms will be taken in the spirit in which they are offered.

SAMPURNANAND

January 25, 1961

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I

EARLY YEARS

MY EARLY life could hardly have been different from that of any other boy born in a lower middle class family in one of the larger cities in northern India. My own city happened to be Varanasi. There was, therefore, a definite religious atmosphere in the house which might not be present to the same extent in other cities. Our house was situated in a thickly-populated locality of the town. There was no open space around, or anywhere near it. The Victoria Park which is now barely two furlongs away was then a refuse dump. The only games which we had were enacting scenes from the *Ramayana* with which Ramlila celebrations had familiarized us.

We were vegetarians to all intents and purposes. This qualifying phrase requires an explanation. My mother was a *pucca* vegetarian but my father could not refuse the meat of an animal sacrificed to Durga. This meant that, on an average, he took meat three or four times a year. I was a non-vegetarian to exactly the same extent. Then in 1902, an incident happened which made me give up meat entirely. That year, there had been a violent outbreak of cholera in the city. Our own family lost two of its members. Three others had had an attack but recovered. When it was all over, we—it was a large party consisting of a number of father's friends—went to Vindhyachal and two goats were sacrificed as a thanks-offering to the Goddess. The meat was cooked and I ate it. Then about three or four days later, I woke up at midnight with a start and the whole scene of sacrifice came vividly before me. The eyes of the sacrificed goats specially held me with their pained, appealing looks. I can still recall that scene. Since that night, I have never touched meat.

Education in Kayastha families began with Urdu in those days, but my father insisted on teaching me Hindi

first. After a year or so, I switched on to Urdu. Then a Persian scholar, Maulvi Moinuddin Ahmad, was engaged to teach me Persian and another teacher took charge of subjects like English, Geography and Arithmetic. My father did not allow himself to become a sleeping partner in the field of my education. He and my teachers were never sparing in their use of the rod. The opportunities for using it were numerous. I was a fairly intelligent boy, but Ramlila often secured precedence over books and home-work was neglected.

Living was cheap in those days and members of a family like ours, definitely in the low-income group, were very well fed, both qualitatively and quantitatively. With an income twenty times as large, I was never able to provide the same food for my dependents. This good food must have been the secret of the good health we enjoyed, because there was little else to contribute towards it.

My school education was preceded by the reading of some religious literature. I had finished the *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das twice over before I was ten. Not that I understood the whole of it. As a matter of fact, the portions which most attracted me were those describing the war between Rama and Ravana. I had finished two other books, the *Sukha Sagar*, the well-known free translation of the *Srimad Bhagwata* and the *Devi Bhagwata*. There were other books, but I do not remember them all.

There were three persons who produced the deepest impression on me in my childhood days, an impression which I have carried all my life. They were my parents and Sital Baba. My mother was a quiet, simple soul. She knew no language other than Hindi, but was a voracious reader. When the daily chores were over, she would lie down with a book in hand, generally a work of fiction, and continue to read sometimes for a couple of hours. My father was an equally voracious reader. Even when he returned from the theatre—and those were the days of the Parsi theatrical companies whose shows lasted till two in the night or morning, shall I say,—he could not sleep till he had put

in at least half-an-hour of reading. It can easily be seen that contact with parents such as these would induce in their son the habit of reading from a very early age. There was another trait of my father to which I must draw attention, a trait infinitely more important than the habit of reading. In a period when the acceptance of a bribe did not bring much of a social stigma to a Government servant of his class — at the time of his death in 1918 at the age of 52, he was drawing only Rs. 200 a month — he was noted for his strict honesty. All the English officers under whom he served spoke highly of his integrity and conscientious performance of duty. He would not deviate from the truth for anything. A test of this came before him in 1904. I was in the School-Leaving Class, but a rule was made that year laying down that no one should sit for the examination before reaching the age of 16 years. I was 14 at the time, having been born on January 1, 1889. It had been provided that if an age entry had been made by mistake, it could be corrected through a Civil Surgeon's certificate and, in special cases, through the guardian's affidavit. It was pointed out to my father that his affidavit would be accepted. He refused to sign a paper embodying a false statement. A relation took me to the Civil Surgeon on his own initiative. The Civil Surgeon said at once that I was not 16. No doctor, looking at me, could have expressed a different opinion. I was held up for two years for my matriculation, but my father's example has always stood out before me as an ideal.

The two years' enforced rest was not entirely wasted. I spent all my time in reading. The literature on which I concentrated was fiction. I cannot give the exact number, of course, but the number of English novels that I took out from the Carmichael Library must have run into several hundreds. Of course, there were other books also. Among those which I found most fascinating were Todd's *Rajasthan*, stories about Russian Nihilists and Scottish Chieftains, and Abbot's *Life of Napoleon*. The last was probably not quite authentic as sober history, but it was very popular with

young men in those days. It fed the fires of the latent anti-British emotion that was present in all of us.

A word about Sital Baba, to whom I have already referred. He joined the family as a servant round about 1857, at the age of sixteen and died in our house in 1910, at the age of 71. I and my younger brothers and sisters were relegated to his fostering care before we were a month old and no child could have had a better nurse and governess. Many of the stories he used to relate and the lullabies he used to sing are still fresh in my mind. Although a servant, he was like a member of the family. My mother used to touch his feet on formal occasions. He was himself a deeply religious man and had visited all the important places of pilgrimage.

I do not think any of my school teachers had much of an influence on my life. The school which I first attended was the Harish Chandra School, situated in a narrow lane in a thickly-populated area. There was not even an apology for a playground attached to it. The only thing in the nature of games and sports that the students enjoyed was breaking municipal street lamps with cloth balls available in the adjoining bazaar at a pice, a piece, and some surreptitious wrestling when, for one reason or other, class rivalries became unmanageably bitter.

II

1905 - 1911

IN THE previous chapter, I have indicated the type of literature, apart from fiction, which attracted me in those days. The ground had been prepared by Hindi books which I had read earlier along with my mother, like the works of R. C. Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and a number of novels and dramas dealing with the exploits of Maharana Pratap and Shivaji. We did not know exactly what we wanted, no specific grievance to which we could refer, but there was a sense of irritation, of resentment, against British rule which was daily growing. I say 'We' because my feelings were shared by a large number of young men all over the country. The Boer War had created the impression that the British were bad fighters who were no match even for a small nation of determined men and the Russo-Japanese War had clearly demonstrated that an Asian nation had defeated the mighty Russians of whom the British were reputedly afraid. People drew the obvious conclusions from these events. The conclusions were not openly expressed; perhaps, they were not even clearly visualised. But they were there, nonetheless. I could see their impact even in our own family, a typical family whose head was a Government servant. Most of my father's friends were also Government servants. They were loyal to the core, and yet, one could see that the new breeze had blown even across their faces.

Then came the Partition of Bengal. Because of its large Bengali population, Varanasi (then Banaras) was naturally most deeply affected by the events in Bengal. I had a number of Bengali friends and attended with them some of their secret meetings and the places where intensive physical exercise was practised as a preparation for the coming struggle with the British. The town was full of spies, *tik-tikis* as they were called, and there was some risk involved in

moving about with Bengalis. But this element of risk added to the zest of life and provided that enthusiasm which participation in conspiratorial activity never fails to create.

I should like to describe an interesting episode of those days. It seems silly today, but there was deep earnestness about it at the time. News about repression in Bengal following the Partition agitation was pouring in, not so much through the Press as the whispering gallery which springs into existence overnight on such occasions. Passions were getting more and more inflamed. It was the summer vacation and schools and colleges were closed. I used to go every day to the nearby Victoria Park, and politics, naturally, formed the dominant theme in our conversations. My own brain was fast becoming a mad-house. I would sit brooding for hours at home. As a release for pent-up tensions, I would go to a small room at the top of the house and walk back and forth, like a caged animal, brandishing a sword. The only victim of my violent thoughts was a small piece of rope stretched to hang clothes on, but I was in deadly earnest all the time. A sense of frustration generated by my inability to decide what to do added to the bitterness of my feelings. My father became alarmed and I was forbidden to leave the house, for fear of my violent outbursts in the Park bringing me into trouble with the police. My madness simmered down after a week and things became normal as before to all appearances but the iron had gone deep down.

The Banaras session of the Congress gave me the opportunity to serve as a volunteer and to hear stalwarts like Shri Gokhale, the President, Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lokmanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Shri Surendra Nath Banerji. What I heard and saw provided the much-needed intellectual support to a mind already stirred to its depths by emotion.

The Swadeshi movement was an off-shoot, and a very important one, of the political agitation against British rule. I was one of those who took the vow never to use foreign cloth, in effect cloth manufactured in England. I kept the vow faithfully except for one lapse. When I joined service

1905-1911

at the Daly College, Indore, in 1915, I found that taking part in sports and games was compulsory. I was absolutely no good at all this but had to get my kit nevertheless. The local shopkeepers assured me that Indian cloth of a suitable kind was not available. Probably, I showed less than the moral courage which should have been rightly expected of me: in any case, I succumbed. Along with Swadeshi, a movement had also started at the time for boycotting foreign sugar. It was reinforced by an appeal to religious sentiment. It was urged that the sugar was purified by passing it over bone-ash and the bone probably came from the cow. Many people were deeply affected by this argument. I was also caught up by it but, somehow, the appeal was not serious enough in my case.

All this while I was pursuing my studies at the Queen's College — it no longer exists — and took my B.Sc. degree from the Allahabad University in 1911. A good deal of my time was devoted to extra-curricular studies. My subjects for my degree were Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, besides General English. As stated in the previous chapter, I had read a fairly large amount of fiction during the two years that I was not allowed to appear for my High School Examination, being under-age. This produced a kind of natural reaction and I read practically no fiction during my years in College. Whatever time I could spare from my regular studies was given to subjects like Botany, Zoology, Geology, Psychology and Astronomy. I found the last the most fascinating of all. My father had studied some Astrology and some Sanskrit astronomical terms like the names of the Zodiacal signs and of the lunar houses were familiar to me from my childhood. I was anxious to locate these objects in the sky but there was no one to guide me. This only whetted my appetite for the subject. I purchased one or two star atlases and, with their help, tried to identify some of the principal constellations. My pains were partially rewarded with success.

My first essay in star-gazing had a rather discouraging sequel. While walking along a rather crowded lane with my

eyes fixed on the stars, I stepped on an innocent dog enjoying a well-earned nap. He did the only thing possible in the circumstances; I received a nasty bite in my calf. The dog was not insane, the insanity having been rather prominently displayed by me. No serious treatment was, therefore, attempted. But I had not learnt wisdom. Only a few days later, I sprained my ankle-joint in the course of a similar walk. This damped my enthusiasm for peripatetic stargazing and I went back to books on Astronomy instead. The view of the sky from the roof of my house was a very restricted one and I could not afford to purchase even a small telescope. We were fortunate in having some very distinguished men among our teachers at College. There was Dr. Venis, the Principal, ably assisted by Prof. Randell, Prof. A. C. Sanyal, Prof. Sharda Charan Chakravarti and Dr. Ganesh Prasad. After his retirement, Prof. Randell was placed in charge of the India House Library. I sought him out when I visited London in 1948. He was good enough to invite me to his house near London and introduced me to members of his family. I have named Dr. Ganesh Prasad last but his was the most dominant personality among our teachers. He was our Professor of Mathematics. A scholar of international reputation and a man of exceptionally austere habits, he enjoyed universal respect from his pupils, some of whom gained great distinction in later life. He was a hard task-master but the habit of hard, honest work which we acquired from him has been a most valuable acquisition of all his pupils.

III

I FIND MY MASTER

THERE ARE certain aspects of a man's life which should remain shielded from the limelight of publicity. Among these, Religion — a man's beliefs about the nature of Reality and his relationship to It, the manner in, and the extent to, which he senses the existence of something that is truly within him, a part of himself and, yet transcends him, the intimate contact, the at-one-ment, which he establishes with that substance which is the substratum of, and pulsates through, all that exists — I feel, stands pre-eminent. It is here that a man has most truly the right to commune with himself in the privacy of his own self. It is true that a man's religion, using the word in the above sense, not in that of a credo or set phrases out of a catechism, influences his whole conscious and subconscious life, and a study of it cannot be excluded from an analysis of the forces which have moulded his personality. Still, I feel that here, if anywhere, a man is entitled to as much privacy as is physically possible.

In my own case, many people know something about what they call my religious tastes and religious approach to fundamental problems. My bent of mind is revealed by my writings. It would, it appears, be meaningless to keep silent over this facet of my life and leave room for speculations, many of which are bound to be unfounded.

In the first chapter, I have stated that from a very early age I began to read some religious books. It was not possible for me to understand much beyond the stories. But I distinctly remember two problems which fascinated me. Brahma, Ishwar, Devi, the books used different names, but they were unanimous in asserting that this Substance, whatever its name, is omnipresent. Two difficulties presented themselves to me. If it is omnipresent, it must be occupying the space occupied by other objects, my own body, for

instance. The second was that an object like this should be visible. My father to whom I referred my difficulty managed somehow to satisfy me. I need not enter into the details.

But there was one problem which haunted me badly and no explanation that father could advance would satisfy. This was the problem of creation. All that I could gather was that in the beginning there was nothing but a vast, infinite sheet of water. Out of it somehow—the process completely eluded me—a human body was created and God inspired it with *prāna*, which I equated with breath. For a child of my age, the number of occasions on which I tried to visualise this scene were countless. The only large sheet of water I had seen was the Ganga. I often conjured up the vision of a human body standing on its sandy bank and someone breathing down its nostrils. But the picture was, somehow, not satisfying. Vague questions would come up for which I could find no answer. Where did the water come from? Has it all dried up now? How did this lifeless body crawl out of the water? These are some samples of my early philosophical speculation.

As I grew older, I outgrew this earlier mood but read a good deal about various religions. The Arya Samaj, Islam, Fire-worship, all seemed to possess some attractive features but none held me for long. In college, I came across many of the books published by the Rationalist Press Association and, for a time, became almost a convert to atheism and materialism. But this was also a passing phase. My mind was constantly seeking to find something, but I did not know exactly what it was. The books of Swami Vivekanand and English translations of the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Upanishads* drew me towards Vedanta. Intellectually, I was powerfully affected by the grandeur of Shankar's thought but the void was still there.

In 1910, I met a young Bengali neighbour named Harendra Nath Sen. He and the other members of his family belonged to the Radha Swami faith. I went through all the literature of that sect available to the general public and was then led to take up the writings of Kabir, Nanak,

Dadu, Jagjiwan, Paltu and the other Mahatmas of the Sant Mat. Literally, a new world was revealed before my eyes. It was a world in which there was no room for verbal jugglery and syllogistic hair-splitting, a world in which truth was not talked about but directly apprehended. It was a world in which people lived on a plane of existence which distinctions of race, caste, creed, class or sex could not reach. It was a region in which the knowledge of 'Reality' was not a prize for intellectual wrestling : here Reality was to be met in all its nakedness.

I was fascinated and frightened. It was clear that entrance to this world could be secured only through the grace of the Guru and progress depended upon *Abhyāsa*, practice of Yoga, and *Vairāgya*, non-attachment. Where could I find a Guru and how could I, a householder, ever become *Virakta*, free from attachments?

I went about meeting a number of Sadhus. Many of them were probably good men but, somehow, I came away disappointed. They did not come up to my expectations, though I myself could not have defined what my expectations were. Incidentally, I also took up the study of Sanskrit about this time. Quite naturally, I was attracted towards books on Yoga. They spoke in the same language as the saints but, unfortunately, the Rosetta stone was not available: I could not understand the language. There was of course the temptation to join the Radha Swami Sect, to which my friend Harendra belonged. I seriously toyed with the idea, but ultimately gave it up. I had a vague concept of what a Yogi should be. To my mind, such a person can be serious when the occasion so demands, but at other times he should be able to laugh and enjoy a good laugh creating around him an atmosphere of cheerfulness and optimism. Unfortunately, most of the members of the sect whom I saw always appeared to be wrapped up in a cloak of seriousness and melancholy and laughter seemed to be taboo in their company. Again, most of them seemed to have reconciled themselves to the dictum contained in the following couplet:

जन्म एक गुरु भक्ति कर, जन्म दूसरे नाम ।

जन्म तीसरे मुक्तिपद, चौथे में निज धाम ॥

Serve the Guru in one life, you will get the sacred Name in the next. In the third life, you will get release from birth and death and in the fourth you will reach the *Nij Dham* (own place), the final goal of complete self-realization. To me this seemed much too long a wait. Let me make it clear that I am not passing any judgment on the Radha Swami Sect and its members. I am only giving my own reactions. These reactions may have been entirely baseless and unrelated to facts.

I felt my condition to be hopeless and began to brood for hours in secret, often weeping bitter tears of despair and frustration. My studies were neglected and, contrary to my usual nature, I became irritable and secretive. My parents were worried and so were my friends. The climax came when I failed in the B.Sc. examination. No one uttered a word of blame or reproach, but that everyone was pained was obvious. I myself felt sorry for having caused so much pain but there was nothing that I could do about it.

Then one day, my mother quietly said to me: "Why not go to Dada? He will help you." Dada was my maternal grandfather, my mother's father. I knew him, of course. I knew that he was a Sadhu and the disciple of Baba Ram Lal, reputed to be a great Yogi. The Baba had breathed his last when I was a boy of eight or nine. Dada was not my grandfather's name but people called him by no other. Very fond of flowers, he had a small garden of his own which he watered with his own hands. A very genial man, he enjoyed a joke and his laughter was infectious. He kept up right through old age his habit of taking vigorous physical exercise, Indian style, and took only one meal a day. This was in the evening. He had a very strong memory and could go on repeating by the hour extracts from Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and Hindi literature on Vedanta and Yoga.

All this I knew but somehow the idea of approaching him in connection with my quest had never entered my head. I

followed mother's advice and went to see him. Quite naturally, he gave me no lesson in spiritual technique that day. As a matter of fact, he gave no specific instruction for months. In the beginning, he seemed to be trying to laugh me out of my ideas. When this failed, he began to speak of the seriousness of the attempt I was thinking of making and the qualifications needed in a person who would aim so high. That I was not possessed of such qualifications was obvious to me but, as I sometimes used to say in vexation, what would be the need for a Guru and where would his grace come in, if the novice were all perfection. An enigmatic smile was the only reply I would receive on such occasions.

Of one thing, however, I was certain. My quest was over: I had found my Master. It is improper to pursue this theme further. What I received from him, unworthy as I am, is not a subject for public narration or discussion. It is sufficient to say that life has now acquired a meaning which it would not have possessed otherwise and I can approach the problems of the present and the future with an assurance and a steadiness of step which I would otherwise have lacked.

IV

1911 - 1920

THESE WERE ten uneventful years in a purely domestic sense, except for a number of deaths in the family, including that of my father from pleurisy in 1918. He was 52 at the time. I was in Bikaner those days but a telegram brought me to Banaras in time to be with him during the last five hours of his life. He breathed his last in my arms.

As stated earlier, I had taken the vow not to accept service under the British Government. But it was not possible for me to continue my studies further. I joined the London Mission School in Banaras as a teacher and migrated the next year to the Prem Mahavidyalaya, Vrindaban, founded by Raja Mahendra Pratap. He offered to send me abroad but, in those days, I was too orthodox to accept the offer. Next year, I came to the Harish Chandra School, Banaras, which I left for the Teachers' Training College, Allahabad, from where I took my L.T. degree in 1916. The Allahabad University no longer grants this degree. The Principal, Mr. Mackenzie, was very kind to me and, on his recommendation, I was appointed a teacher in the Daly College, Indore. This was an institution meant for the education of members of the families of ruling princes, chiefs and sardars of Central India.

The College was run on English public school lines. The number of students varied between 50 and 52 and the staff consisted of 17 persons of whom 4, including the Principal, were Englishmen. The Principal, Mr. Hide, was an institution in himself. He was a strict disciplinarian and did not allow the scions even of the biggest princely houses to develop a swelled head. The students had to wear Indian dress in school and were not allowed to enter the Masters' room with their shoes on. He had certain queer ideas or perhaps they were devices, intended to keep those working in the College divided in separate groups. Once one of the

clerks was found reading a newspaper meant for the Masters' room. Mr. Hide marched him to the room and delivered himself of the dictum that "a clerk is little better than a chaprasi" and cannot touch a paper meant for the teachers.

Some of his ideas on teaching were still more queer. To people like me who had studied the latest methods at a training college, they seemed ridiculous. For instance, here is a definition of "to read" given by the Principal himself "to look at a sign and make the sound for which the sign stands". I can give another example which reaches still higher levels of absurdity. I had joined the College along with two other teachers. At our very first meeting, the Principal asked us how we would explain the word "door". My two companions were floored by the question, as any sensible man would be. By a rare stroke of perverse genius, I gave this definition "A door is something with which we open or close a doorway, a door-way being a hole in one of the walls of an enclosed space which is called a room". This silly performance won for me the Principal's appreciation.

It was a Rajkumar College, but, in their own way, the senior students gave expression to a number of grievances. One of the boys used to say that his ruling ambition was that England should become an Indian dependency and he should be appointed Resident at the Court of the English King. He would then try to avenge himself for all the petty insults to which Indian Rulers were subjected by the Residents accredited to their States.

It was at this College that I came in touch with Pandit Banarasi Das Chaturvedi, the famous journalist and expert on the problems of Indians overseas. He was also a member of the staff and immensely popular with the boys.

After three years' stay at Indore, I went to Bikaner, to act as the Headmaster of the Dungar College. It was a fairly large institution and had over one thousand students on its rolls. It even boasted a law class, where instruction in Law was given in Hindi.

Bikaner was a progressive State by Rajasthan standards and its ruler, Maharaja Ganga Singh, had won an important place for himself in public life. There was a Council of Ministers, whose ablest members were Rai Bahadur Munshi Kamta Prasad, the Home Member, and Mr. Rudkin, I.C.S., the Revenue Member, whose services had been borrowed from the Punjab.

There was also a legislature with the members possessing the right of interpellation. His Highness was never tired of advertising this fact. Every year, a number of editors of English newspapers were invited to witness the Budget Session of the Assembly. The budget was debated upon and there were questions which Ministers had to answer. All this seemed very democratic but it was really a facade for pure autocracy. As one of the members who had large business interests in Calcutta said to me "If we were free to do so, we could tear this budget to shreds". Everything, including the questions, was dictated. My services were requisitioned to translate in Hindi, from the English original, the speeches to be delivered by His Highness and the Finance Minister. As a matter of fact, the Maharaja delivered his speech in Marwari, in the form of a free and extempore version of his English speech.

Among other things, one feature of life in the State was hostility against non-Bikaneris, *pardesis* (foreigners), as they were called. One could sense it in the atmosphere. I remember an incident which amply illustrates this anti-*pardesi* feeling and also limelights the greatness of the science of Astrology.

The Maharaja was a great believer in Astrology. The astrologer whom he most trusted was Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Ayodhya Nath of Banaras. Ayodhyanathji would not live in Bikaner and he had posted one of his best pupils there. The latter had not only to prepare the advance *Varshaphal* (a detailed account of the year's happenings) for all members of the ruling family but to arrange for the religious worship necessary to ward off the evil effects of likely planetary combinations. A copy of each *Varshaphal*

was kept by His Highness under his own lock and key and a register was maintained giving full particulars of each propitiatory *puja*. The Astrologer belonged to Uttar Pradesh and the staff of Brahmans engaged by him all came from U.P. and Bihar, because he did not trust the local men. Naturally, this was one of the sore points in the anti-*pardesi* campaign.

Lord Chelmsford visited Bikaner in 1920, accompanied by his Foreign Secretary, Mr. Wood. In the course of a shikar in one of the outlying districts, a bullet aimed by Mr. Wood at a deer accidentally hit the heir-apparent, Maharajkumar Sardul Singh, in the arm. The wound was not very deep but, quite naturally, there were great rejoicings in the State at the Maharajkumar's recovery. The occasion was utilized by the local chauvinists for a frontal attack on the *pardesis*. It was represented to the Maharaja that the Pandit had failed to give any warning of such an accident, which might well have proved fatal, and also failed to take any steps to avert the catastrophe. Every *pardesi* — and there were quite a good many of us among the officers — was worried, because we felt that an attack on one of us was an offensive against all of us. But the Pandit himself remained supremely calm. His Highness called a small meeting for the purpose. The Pandit asked him to take out his copy of the Maharajkumar's *varshaphal*. It was recorded in it in clear and unambiguous words: 'On such and such a date, between the hours of 2 and 2-20 in the afternoon, there is a great danger from fire.' The Pandit turned round in triumph and said, "This is the nearest we can go. If anyone can find mention of fire-arms in books on Astrology, I shall retire from the profession from today." He clinched the matter by showing from his register the *puja* that was being performed to minimize the risk. No one had any observations to make. The Maharaja himself admitted that all that was humanly possible had been done. This put a quietus on the anti-*pardesi* movement for the time being. And Astrology had been fully vindicated.

My wanderings from one place to another in search of employment in various types of educational institutions brought me a wealth of experience which would not have been possible otherwise. I gained knowledge of conditions in feudal India which people in British India could not have easily imagined. But I did not spend all my time digesting such varied experience. Another sphere of activity had attracted me. I had entered the field of literature.

I wrote my first book, *Dharma Vira Gandhi* — it was a life of Mahatmaji — when the South African Satyagraha was on. The proceeds were given to the fund raised in India for the purpose. The book underwent three editions. Other books written during this period were *Maharaj Chhatra Sal* and *Bharat Ke Deshi Rashtra*, a book about the Indian States, *Bhautik Vijnana* on Physics and *Jyotirvinoda* on Astronomy. I also used to contribute to a number of Hindi journals. It was not safe to write on political subjects while in service in Indore and Bikaner. I had, therefore, to adopt a number of pen-names, the most common being 'Kāpālika' and 'Sukhākhil'.

A very important event that took place during this period was the eighth session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore in 1917. I was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Reception Committee and the President of the Exhibitions Sub-Committee. Pt. Banarasidas Chaturvedi was the Secretary of the latter. It was a successful session from every point of view but what contributed most to its success was the fact that Mahatmaji was its President. This was the first occasion for me to come into contact with him. Another person whose acquaintance I first made on this occasion was Shri Purushottam Das Tandon.

V

I JOIN THE CONGRESS

DURING THE period covered by the previous chapter, events had taken place which shook the world to its very foundations. There was the First World War and its aftermath in the form of displacement and decimation of large populations, economic ruin, epidemics and disruption of international intercourse. But there was an important credit side. Poland which had remained vivisected for a century and a half had at last become a united and free country, and Czechoslovakia had regained her independence after four hundred years. The Arabs had shaken off the Turkish yoke, and Ireland had intensified its efforts to throw off British hegemony. And, more important than all this, was the overthrow of the rule of the Czars and its replacement by the Soviets.

News of what the U.S.S.R. and the Communist Party stood for took time to filter through. There were no direct means of communication and insidious British propaganda based on half-truths and untruths was practically the only source of information. I remember that what was most talked about, discussed and, of course, condemned, about the Communists was their attitude towards Religion and their supposed policy of nationalization of women. But, with all this, there gradually grew the belief that the Communists were enemies of imperialism and friends of the underdog. The manner in which they were holding at bay the forces of reaction and the armies of the imperialist powers also evoked admiration and sympathy.

The whole of northern Africa and South and South-east Asia was in a ferment. India as a politically conscious country was naturally most deeply affected. Indian soldiers had fought on many fronts and the bubble of white invincibility had burst. Indians had received emergency Commissions and the belief in the indispensibility of the

British Officer no longer existed. For long, Indians had been feeling that they had a right to govern themselves. The British had, for a time, succeeded in creating a division in nationalist ranks by helping to bring into existence the Muslim League. But such devices can, at the best, bring only temporary success. The Morley-Minto reforms satisfied no one, and 1916 saw the bringing about of a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League which again brought the whole of nationalist India together.

If the British had been wise and more far-sighted, if they had applied the lessons of history more carefully, they could easily have made friends of India and changed the course of world events. But imperialists are never wise. Probably, there was also the conviction that what was true of white people was not applicable to the brown and other coloured races. In any case, no sincere attempt was made to win over Indian opinion. The Montagu-Chelmsford scheme of reforms was no doubt drawn up, but what might have satisfied people ten years earlier appeared to be hopelessly inadequate in the climate of post-war years. Of course, there was a section of opinion willing to work the scheme for what it was worth but, on the whole, advanced nationalist opinion rejected it completely. It was felt, and openly stated, that the country was being cheated of its due after the unstinted help it had given to the British during the War.

The situation became more and more tense. The language of liberalism failed to evoke any response and the idea of freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent lost all its charm. People, at least some of the more virile young men, began to think in terms of wresting power by violent means and secret meetings and conspiracies sprang into life. Those who took part in such activities were brave men, who did not care for life or property. They were hunted by Indian spies and sometimes betrayed by faithless companions, but they carried on their work, supremely indifferent to consequences. It was a privilege to know some of them, as I did. The British showed utter lack of imagination and resorted to the favourite weapon

of repression. The history of those dark days is too well known to need lengthy recapitulation. There was the infamous Rowlatt Act, and then the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre of innocent men in a crowded enclosure by soldiers under the orders of General Dyer. Such butchery was a disgraceful act of which soldiers should never have been guilty. But Dyer and the then satrap of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, were out to teach the people of India a lesson which they should never forget.

They succeeded too well. The crawling lane, through which every Indian had to pass on his belly, the open-air floggings of respectable citizens, the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, all these things have really taught us a lesson which we shall never forget. That this was a different lesson from what Dyer and O'Dwyer had intended is a different matter. The nation had been insulted as it had never been before and nothing had brought home to it so strongly the humiliation that foreign rule implies. National self-respect had been hurt too deeply for the wound to heal. The British Government had irrevocably signed its own death-warrant.

Lokmanya Tilak who had first taught the nation 'Swarajya is our birth-right' was dead. He occupied the place of pre-eminence among those national leaders who had discarded the begging-bowl approach of the Liberal leaders. He pointed out that appeals to the fair-mindedness of the British people could not carry us very far and our nationalism would have to be militant if it was to succeed. His death would have created a vacuum hard to fill. But the nation's destiny had decreed otherwise. Mahatma Gandhi stepped into the breach and Tilak could not have had a better successor. Gandhiji called himself a political disciple of Gokhale. Whatever he might have meant by this expression, it is clear that his technique was entirely different from any advocated by Gokhale. Gokhale was the last of the great Liberals: Gandhiji was the first and the last of the great Satyagrahis.

The campaign in South Africa had brought Gandhiji unrivalled prestige among Indian leaders and even before

he had formally joined the Congress, all eyes had turned to him as the prospective leader of the nation. The country was in no mood to listen to the Liberals and even the Home Rule League sponsored by the dynamic personality of Mrs. Besant had proved a still-born institution. The Congress, with over three decades of political service behind it, was the one organisation which could weld the nation together but it stood in need of a new ideology and a new driving force. This was supplied by Gandhiji. He had not had time to expound his philosophy or explain his technique in full and the nation had not fully understood exactly what he stood for. But it was felt that his technique was one of active, aggressive, resistance and, for the moment, this was enough. All opposition to his methods was swept aside. The old leadership had serious misgivings but it was helpless. The Nagpur Session of the Congress in 1920 accepted Gandhiji's programme of Non-cooperation and the schism with Liberalism was complete.

I was in Bikaner during these stirring times. The State was in the back-waters, far from the active currents of political activity, but even the sluggish life of such remote places was stirred by the breath of life. The state of mind of a man like myself can easily be imagined. It was clear that my place was in the thick of the fight, not in Bikaner. It is idle to deny that my post had its attractions. My service was secure and I was drawing a salary of Rs. 350 a month which would have been automatically raised to Rs. 375 in September next. It has to be remembered that Rs. 350 in those days was equal in purchasing power very nearly to Rs. 1,400 today. And I had a large family to support and had no other assets to fall back upon. I was not one of those simple folk who believed that when Gandhiji spoke of Swaraj in one year he literally meant that India would be free on December 31, 1921. So far as I could see, we had before us a long period, extending over several decades, of travail and suffering. But there was a growing faith in the nation's destiny, a confidence that

Freedom's battle once begun
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son
Though baffled oft is ever won,

a chafing at my own tardiness in joining the ranks. The dormant wishes and aspirations of my early days came to life and the only question was how soon and how I would enlist under Gandhiji's banner.

Events in my own city hastened my decision. In response to Gandhiji's call for the boycott of educational institutions, a number of students, led by Prof. J. B. Kripalani, had come out of the Hindu University and founded the Gandhi Ashram. This was the humble beginning of this institution which now produces and sells *khadi* worth several crores. It is a pity that the Ashram shifted its headquarters from Varanasi to Meerut. Sometime earlier, the Kashi Vidyapitha had been started with a generous donation from that philanthropist-politician, Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta. It was intended to impart education of university standard, but two conditions were attached to it. One, that the medium of instruction should be Hindi and the other, that it should not accept any financial assistance from the Government. Any infringement of these conditions would make it ineligible to receive help from the trust established by the founder-donor.

The Provincial Government used to conduct Sanskrit examinations every winter, and confer degrees, on the basis of these examinations, which were recognised as the hall-mark of scholarship all over the country. This year a number of students decided to boycott the examinations and to prevent others from sitting for them. A number of Congress leaders from the city took an active interest in this agitation, chief among them being a Muslim gentleman, Dr. Abdul Karim. The agitation was put down, but the courage shown by these young men won for them general appreciation from the public. Those who had a hand in giving support to the authorities — and Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya was among them — came in for bitter public criticism. This was the first essay in dynamic non-cooperation that was

practised in this State (then, province) and Varanasi had the credit to stage it. Many of the non-cooperating young men were sent to jail. On coming out they formed a body called the Sanskrit Chhatra Samiti. I shall have occasion to refer again to this splendid body of selfless workers. It may be pointed out, in passing, that Chandra Shekhar Azad, the famous revolutionary, was one of its members.

These events in my own city naturally produced a great impression on me and added considerably to my agitation. I went home from Bikaner for the summer vacation. Subscriptions were then being collected for the one-crore Tilak Swaraj Fund. I contributed my mite, but this could hardly be satisfying. I made up my mind to resign from service and did so in July when the College re-opened, after the vacation. In my letter of resignation, I pointed out my desire to take part in active political activities against the British Government with which the State was in alliance and requested for an early acceptance of my resignation. According to the usual rules, the State Government could have asked me to stay on for three months but they were good enough to let me leave after only one month. I was free on July 31, 1921.

From Bikaner, I proceeded to Ajmer and stayed for a few days with my friend, the late Shri Chand Karan Sarda. He was a prominent social and political worker of the town. It was there that I first became a member of the Congress. It was Shri Sarda's wish that I should stay in Ajmer and make it my field of activities. I felt, however, that my proper place was in my own province, particularly my own city. Early in August, therefore, I took leave of Ajmer, to seek adventure as a humble recruit in the ranks of the Congress.

VI

1921-1922

AFTER A few days' stay in Banaras, I proceeded to the Shantiniketan. Shri C. F. Andrews, Dinabandhu Andrews as he came to be affectionately called, was there and had asked me to see him. His intention was to visit some of the States in Rajasthan, specially Udaipur, and investigate cases of large-scale repression of peasantry, so widely reported in the Press. He felt that my knowledge of Rajasthan might be useful and asked me to accompany him as his Secretary. I readily agreed, but the States he had approached refused to grant him the necessary permission. The visit had, therefore, to be called off.

Coming back to Banaras, I was offered the editorship of the *Maryada*. This was a Hindi monthly started years ago with the blessings of Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya. At the time of which I am speaking, it had become a financial liability. Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta, to whom I have already referred, took it over to relieve its editor-proprietor Pt. Krishna Kant Malaviya of the burden, promising to return the journal whenever the latter so wished. The magazine was brought from Allahabad to Banaras. I was able to introduce one novel feature during my period as editor. Every month a chart of the night sky, prepared for the latitude of Banaras, was given, with brief explanatory notes.

I became an active Congress worker almost as soon as I came back from my visit to Shri Andrews. Among those who took a prominent part in Congress activities in those days were Dr. Abdul Karim, Babu Baijnath Singh, Prof. Ram Das Gaur and Pt. Shiva Vinayak Misra. All, with the exception of the last, are now dead. The tempo of popular feeling was rising. The Tilak Swaraj Fund had been fully subscribed and people were expecting the Congress to take the next step in the fight for Swaraj. I had been elected Secretary of

the District Congress Committee. The President was Dr. Bhagavan Das, the noted thinker and scholar. He was every inch a gentleman and, in spite of his scholarship, he had a genial fund of humour which at once endeared him to those who had the opportunity to come in close contact with him. He had his own ideas which often differed materially from those enforced officially from the Congress platform, and had his own ways of expression which sometimes irritated younger men. But these peculiarities were inseparable facets of his personality to which it was not difficult to accommodate oneself. Anyone who took an interest in Sanskrit and the mode of thought and life which found its best expression in Sanskrit literature, was sure to win the affection and regard of this great scholar, of whom Banaras had every reason to be proud.

A word about the Khilafat movement would not be out of place. The people at large traced its etymology to Khilafat, opposition, on the ground that it was aimed against the British Government. Actually, of course, it was derived from Khalifa, the title of the Turkish Emperors as semi-religious heads of the Islamic world. As a matter of fact, this title was not universally recognised. The Mughal Emperors of India, for instance, never acknowledged this headship. In fact, the Caliphate had almost ceased to exist except on paper but, faced by determined opposition from European powers, the later Sultans had sought to revive it, with a view to win the support of world Muslim opinion. They succeeded to the extent that colonial powers with large Muslim populations felt embarrassed in engaging in hostile activity against the Turks. At the end of the first World War, Turkey lay in ruins at the feet of its European victors. There was every prospect of the Sultanate, and along with it the Caliphate, being abolished. It was at this juncture that the Khilafat movement was born. Its object was to exercise pressure on the British Government not to disturb the position of the Sultan. As he was not a mere religious head, he could not remain the Khalifa without retaining his kingship. The success of the movement would

have robbed the victors of the fruits of their victory and ensured the perpetuity of the Sultanate. Quite obviously, the movement as such could have appealed only to Muslims but, under the inspiration of Mahatmaji, the Congress lent it its powerful moral support. The result was that while a number of Muslims were drawn towards the Congress in this way, a very large number of Hindus began to take an active part in the Khilafat campaign. The Government had thus to face a two-pronged attack. At a very early stage, I was coopted a member of the Majlis-e-Shoora, the inner circle of the Banaras Khilafat Committee, but somehow I could not muster the enthusiasm which some of my other Hindu friends found so natural. I could not find any explanation for Hindus fighting to perpetuate an institution pertaining to another religion when there was no rational basis for the institution by itself. It also seemed dangerous to import religion into politics to such an extent as to base the patriotic actions of a large section of the population on religious sentiment which had been aroused by a political act of certain European nations which could quite as easily undo the mischief. An incident brought the illogicality inherent in the situation to a head and solved the problem, at least so far as I was concerned.

The political divisions carved out by political organisations for their convenience were not always coterminous with the government's administrative divisions, and in some cases, were not coterminous with each other. The district of Meerut, for example, fell under the jurisdiction of the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee, but was included in the United Provinces by the Khilafat Committee. An exhibition sponsored or supported by officials was held in the district in winter. The Provincial Khilafat Committee decided that it should be boycotted, but the Delhi Congress Committee saw no need to issue any such instructions. This placed persons who owed allegiance to both organisations in a quandary. The possibility of a clash was inherent in the situation. An overt dispute was averted but feelings were sore for quite some time. This was a local affair but a sharp

difference of opinion over a more serious question and affecting a larger area could easily be visualised. I resigned my membership of the Khilafat Committee. Gradually, Hindus in other places also dissociated themselves from the organisation and nationalist Muslims also saw no reason to remain in two bodies when the Congress was quite potent to find scope for all their energies. When Kamal Ata Turk liquidated the Sultanate, the movement collapsed for lack of a basis and those who had flocked to its standards merely because of its religious appeal quietly went home.

As the end of the year approached, tension grew. There were brief skirmishes, so to say, in one place and another. In Banaras, there was an intensive picketing of shops selling foreign cloth. The shopkeepers capitulated after two or three days and accepted the conditions laid down by the Congress Committee. There was only one casualty — Dr. Abdul Karim had been arrested. But these were insignificant events and everyone felt that there was something big in the offing. What its nature would be and how it would materialize no one knew.

The British Government solved this problem for us. It invited the Prince of Wales to visit India. Wherever the Prince went, his visit was heralded and accompanied by powerful demonstrations and violent repression. In the United Provinces, he was scheduled to visit Lucknow, Allahabad and Banaras, the dates being December 11, 12 and 13 respectively. The Congress had decided that, while the people should keep perfectly non-violent, there should be a complete boycott of all functions connected with the visit and all bazaars completely closed.

Naturally, we in Banaras were anxious to organise things in a manner worthy of its importance in the country's life. The first thing was to issue a notice calling upon the people to implement the Congress decision. Here a difficulty presented itself. The word universally used in this connection was 'hartāl' but, our President, Dr. Bhagavan Das, would not permit it to be used. His idea was that it was derived from *hār* (bones) and *tālā* (lock), indicating that

whenever someone in the old days wanted to organise a stoppage of all business, he would put a few pieces of bone on the lock in every shop. Be this as it may, we had to eschew the word 'hartāl' and use in its place the expressive but cumbersome phrase 'kārbār band', stoppage of all business. It was decided that a notice over the signatures of all members of the Committee would be printed at the Jnana Mandal Press, owned by Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta. It would be brought to the house of Dr. Bhagavan Das, and a couple of days before the Prince's visit, we would all assemble there and distribute copies all over the city. An unfortunate incident, however, prevented the execution of this plan. In course of conversation with the district magistrate, one of our members who was a personal friend of his, inadvertently let slip the information that notices were to be taken from Dr. Bhagavan Das's house and distributed that very afternoon. The magistrate drove down to the place and simply walked away with the notices. The meeting which took place after these facts came to our knowledge, was one of the worst that I have had the misfortune to attend. Bitter epithets were hurled about and the atmosphere was one of distrust and suspicion. We felt angry and frustrated that our well-laid plans had gone awry and Banaras would not be able to give a good account of itself. In the midst of all this confusion, one could see that Dr. Bhagavan Das was feeling very sore that the magistrate had been able to carry away the notices from his house. In a way, he seemed to feel personally responsible for what had happened and wanted to make amends, as it were. Ultimately, at his insistence, it was decided that another notice should be published, this time over his signature alone and Pt. Shiva Vinayak Misra promised to print it overnight in his small press. The Gandhi Ashram group under Kripalani's leadership undertook to distribute it.

Dr. Bhagavan Das, Pt. Shiva Vinayak Misra, Shri Kripalani and other members of the Ashram were all arrested but the hartal and boycott was a complete success. It was the first effort of the kind made by the Congress in

Banaras and the results went far beyond our wildest expectations. The people were only waiting for a lead from us.

What had happened in Banaras had happened in Lucknow and Allahabad as well. The Government had issued a notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, making it illegal for anyone to enrol himself as a Congress Volunteer: to enrol another was a still more heinous offence. This provided the opportunity for which people had been waiting. The Government itself provided the means to defy authority. On the day the Prince visited Banaras, the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee was holding a meeting in Allahabad. Only one member from Banaras, Prof. Ram Das Gaur, could attend, the rest of us being busy with arranging reception for the Prince. In all fifty-five members were present; they were all arrested.

The Prince's visit was over and there was a temporary lull but everywhere people were busy seeking to utilize to the full the technique so considerably provided by the Government. The situation was an unprecedented one. The British Government had not anticipated such feelings of deep resentment and determination to defy authority regardless of consequences. It was the first time after 1857 that the Indian people had stood up against the British, but the situation this time was fraught with greater danger because every class of the population was equally stirred. As Lord Reading, the Viceroy, said "I am puzzled and perplexed". But the situation was no less puzzling and perplexing for Indian leadership. Forces were being unleashed which it would be no easy task to keep in restraint. The whole movement was pivoted on non-violence. It was not that every Congressman accepted non-violence as a creed, like Mahatmaji. There were very few, indeed, who were prepared to subscribe to the dictum that Swaraj would be unacceptable if it came through violence. But most Congressmen had adopted non-violence as a kind of a working hypothesis, as a matter of policy. It was felt that, circumstanced as we were, an armed revolt was out of the question. Non-violence would not allow the enemy to use to the full

the brute force at his disposal. At the same time, it was ennobling, purifying, cleansing. It entailed self-sacrifice. It denied the petty satisfaction which comes from hitting back, but opened the door to the experience, at once ineffable and pure, which comes from a sublimation, however imperfect, of one's lower self. We did not become saints, all of us, but those who had the rare good fortune of feeling the Mahatma's touch were different men ever after. His alchemy turned dross into gold. This happened to individuals all through Gandhiji's life, but the experiment was not repeated on a mass scale after 1921. As some people said, it was the culmination of scores of previous births to have joined the Congress in that year.

But non-violence is not easy to practise on a mass scale. It is a miracle to which so many have borne witness that during the height of the movement, not an Englishwoman was molested, not an Englishman was robbed of a pice. And yet discontent was intense and, if violence were once to break out, it might become uncontrollable.

However, all this had to be faced and yet the struggle had to be continued. Volunteers began to be enrolled in every town. When this failed to provoke the authorities into activity, lists of volunteers began to be openly published. It was not possible for the police to condone this open defiance and arrests followed as a matter of course.

In Banaras, however, I found myself in the midst of an exceptional set of circumstances. The District Congress Committee decided that the enrolment of volunteers should not take place till after the session of the Congress which was scheduled to meet in Ahmedabad in the last week of December. I could not reconcile myself to this and set about the work of enrolment. In this work, I received the greatest assistance from the young members of the Asahyogi Sanskrit Chhatra Samiti to which I have already referred. These men were indefatigable and hard work seemed literally to be the breath of their nostrils. In a few days, several hundred volunteers were enrolled. But this posed a new problem. The volunteers were restive and wanted to do something.

It was then that I proposed to the editor of the *Aj* to publish the names of our volunteers, as some papers in other cities had done. The *Aj* was a daily with a very wide circulation and was practically owned by Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta. Shri Sri Prakasa, at present Governor of Maharashtra, was the Chief Editor. My suggestion was accepted and the names were composed. Then for some reason not known to me, opinions suddenly changed. The composed matter was ordered to be distributed. A meeting was called at the Jnana Mandal Press to which I was invited. It was decided that nothing should be done till everyone had returned from Ahmedabad. Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta was good enough to purchase a ticket for me.

This was, perhaps, one of the most difficult times that I have ever passed through. Here were men, all senior to me in Congress work, influential men who had been maintaining the organization with their money and the moral support which their social status gave them. They were unanimously of the opinion that we should lie low for the present. Heaven alone knows what line of action would be pursued on their return. On the other hand, I was a comparatively unknown man, new to the Congress, with no resources to back me. And yet, it seemed to me that the decision which the seniors were endorsing was all wrong. It seemed to be completely out of tune with the times. I also felt that it was unfair to Banaras and to our volunteers. But could I, should I, ignore their decision and adopt a militant programme on my own responsibility? No one knew what form British repression would take. People might be hanged or shot, deprived of all their property or tortured. Was a humble individual like myself to take the responsibility for letting loose all this and, perhaps, worse on individuals who would be following me blindly without fully realising the implications of their act? Heaven knows what a restless night I passed but calm came to me in the early hours of the morning. I made up my mind to take the risk and felt a load slipping away from my shoulders. I sent a letter to the Joint Secretary of the Committee, Shri Shivanandan Singh,

intimating him of my decision and of my willingness to accept whatever disciplinary action the Committee might take against me for acting in contravention of its wishes.

Our plans — the plans made by members of the Chhatra Samiti and myself — were soon finalized. Instructions were issued as to who and how many would court arrest, once the Police began to take serious notice of us. Our idea was not to send more than twenty men to jail each day. In this way, our volunteers would last for at least a fortnight. By that time, the leaders would have returned from Ahmedabad. They could then deal with the situation as they best pleased. Notices were then issued over my signature, calling upon the people to enrol as volunteers and pasted in several places. One of these was pasted on the notice-board in front of the main police station, the Kotwali. The Police removed it several times but a fresh copy would invariably be found on the board after some time. The credit for this goes entirely to Chandra Shekhar Azad. I was arrested at my house at eight in the morning, on December 24.

The plans I had made broke down completely. Instead of 20, about 75 volunteers courted arrest the first day and this continued for several days running. The Police gave up all attempt at discrimination. They would station a van in front of the Police station and anyone who wanted to go to prison had simply to take his seat in it. Many enthusiasts who had never cared to enrol themselves secured precedence over regular volunteers. This was something novel. In the evening when it was getting late and people continued to sing and raise slogans before entering the vans, the Police would beg them to desist and come in. "We have been standing here the whole day and are terribly tired", they would say and the volunteers would obligingly move in.

Such large-scale onrush created serious difficulties for the Jail authorities. They had suddenly to find a large number of blankets. Our volunteers would not accept old and torn blankets and there was no way of bullying them into obedience. Reforms had to be introduced in the kitchen within a day or so. The usual practice was for flour to be

kneaded by foot. This had to be substituted by kneading by hand and the stringy vegetables supplied to prisoners had to be replaced by fresh cabbages and cauliflowers growing in the jail garden.

In February 1922, I was transferred to the District Jail, Lucknow, where all Congressmen who had been placed in the special class were concentrated. I could give many interesting stories of jail life, particularly of *tikram*, the clandestine machinery through which prisoners manage to get almost anything that they want. I shall refer to this in a subsequent chapter.

I shall only say this that a prison is a wonderful school in practical psychology. We can all afford to pose like gentlemen in the brief periods of intercourse outside, but it is impossible to sail under false colours for long in jail where people are thrown in one another's company all the twenty-four hours. Tempers get easily frayed and little weaknesses which might otherwise have gone undetected peep out for all to see. He is indeed a fortunate man who is able to retain the respect of his fellows after a long stay with them in prison. At the same time, heights of character are revealed where one would least expect them. I have seen the spirit of self-effacement, helpfulness and forbearance and a devotion to truth among the so-called ordinary prisoners who were in prison for offences that no one would associate with goodness of mind.

My time was mostly spent in reading but I did a little spinning as well. Many of the friends I made in Lucknow District Jail came later to occupy a prominent place in our national life. It almost seems a pity that very little is known to the public about the special skills of which some of them gave evidence, while in prison. How many people, for instance, know that the great Acharya Kripalani used to climb trees and jump from tree to tree with a grace of movement which might put our simian cousins to shame!

I have used the word 'men' when referring to our volunteers. They were not all adults. Among the two youngest of these 'men' in Banaras, were Kamalapati

Tripathi, aged 12, and Raghunath Singh, aged 13. The former has earned a great reputation for himself as a Congress worker and a Minister in Uttar Pradesh. The latter has also distinguished himself as a Congress worker and a member of Parliament. And I must not forget to mention Chandra Shekhar Azad. He was also a boy and one of the most enterprising members of the Chhatra Samiti. By his courage and intelligence, he stood head and shoulders over the others. A few days after our arrest, he was also arrested and brutally flogged. He cried 'Bande Mataram' with every stroke of the cane. The physical wound healed, but from that day, Azad became a changed man. The British Government made him an implacable enemy and a powerful revolutionary.

I had been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of one hundred rupees. The fine had been realized by the Police carrying away from my house some watches sent by Dr. Brahmanand Agnihotri, an old pupil of mine who was in Germany at the time. I was released in July 1922, as my sentence had been reduced by six months on the recommendation of a Committee set up by the Government to review the cases of non-cooperators in prison.

The last few months in jail had been very dull and uninteresting. There were no fresh faces to be seen. The movement had been suspended by Mahatmaji after the unfortunate incident at Chauri Chaura, in Gorakhpur, in which some policemen were violently done to death by an angry mob. Many of us did not appreciate this suspension. We were of the view that while no Congressman should countenance violence in any shape or form, it would be difficult in a big country like India always to keep the people in check everywhere. The outbreak of spasmodic violence under provocation could not be entirely ruled out. If the movement were to be suspended everytime someone in a remote corner acted foolishly, we could never proceed much further. Incidentally, we would be placing a powerful weapon in the hands of the Government. It would be the easiest thing in the world to incite some people to violence

over some local grievance and then sit back for our leaders to call a halt to our movement.

A very large number of Congressmen entertained such thoughts at the time, but sober reflection convinced us that what Mahatmaji had done was an act of the soundest statesmanship. In the first place, the movement had already spent itself. It visibly weakened after about six weeks. There had been little preparation and the momentum generated by mere resentment and the novelty of jail-going as a pleasant spree was bound to be exhausted sooner or later. A wise general knows that orderly retreat is sometimes the only method of preserving his army's morale. If this tactic is not adopted in time, the army might become a disorganised rabble in flight. Again, the suspension of the movement on the ground that people had not practised non-violence gave the public a much-needed jolt. It emphasized the fact that when Mahatmaji and the Congress spoke of non-violence, they really meant what they said. If the nation wanted to march forward under this leadership, it would have to accept the discipline imposed by non-violence. It was a timely lesson and the public paid heed to it.

A couple of years later, I heard a curious commentary about our movement. A political leader from Tunis was making a tour of India and happened to meet some of us during a visit to Banaras. If I remember aright, his name was Abdul Karim. The gist of what he told us was this: "You do not know what people in Africa and South Asia think of you. You are yourselves slaves but you are also the willing instruments of the British for keeping other nations in bondage. Whenever trouble breaks out in any British Colony, Indian troops are sent to restore order. All these nations hate you. Our own tyrants, the French and the Italians, take heart from the fact that the British keep you down so easily. When at last you began your non-cooperation movement, there was jubilation all over North Africa and South Asia. We felt that our day of deliverance had come. Our foreign rulers were really trembling from fear. But you

are wonderful fighters. You collapsed after a bare six weeks. The result is that our chains have become tighter. Europeans have become confident that Asians and Africans can never shake off their serfdom." I must say that for many of us this was a revelation. We had never looked at the question of our independence from this angle.

VII

FIRST CONTACTS WITH COMMUNISM

ON RETURN from jail, I resumed my editorship of the *Maryada* and continued to edit it till early in 1923, when I joined the Kashi Vidyapitha as Professor of Philosophy. Among the other members of the staff were Shri Sri Prakasa, the late Acharya Narendra Deva, the late Pt. Yajna Narain Upadhyaya, Shri Birbal Singh and Shri Ram Sharana, both of whom are now members of Parliament. Dr. Bhagavan Das himself used to take classes sometimes. It was a galaxy of talent and character of whom any educational institution might well be proud. The authorities of the Vidyapitha had kept the institution out of the vortex of the non-cooperation movement with the result that with the single exception of the Professor of Mathematics, Shri Dharma Vir, no teacher or student had courted arrest and, Dr. Bhagavan Das excepted, the members of the Managing Body also had kept aloof from the movement. Perhaps there was some justification for this policy but generally it was not appreciated. In any case, the stigma was more than wiped out in the coming years. Teachers and students of the Vidyapitha were in the forefront of the fight for freedom and the class-rooms were more than once under Police lock and key. Many of our Shastris — this was the degree conferred on our graduates — have given a very good account of themselves, and occupied positions of responsibility in the public life of the country. I may refer, for example, to Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, now Home Minister, Dr. Keskar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Shri T. N. Singh, member of the Planning Commission, Shri Kamalapati Tripathi, for several years Home and Education Minister in Uttar Pradesh, the late Shri Harihar Nath Shastri who occupied such a distinguished place among Indian labour leaders and Shri Raja Ram Shastri, Professor at the Kashi Vidyapitha, who has recently returned after a

couple of years' study in the United States. My younger brother, Paripurnanand Varma, who is so well known at home and abroad for his work in the field of penal reform, was also one of our Shastris. It was a pleasure to work with such colleagues and a privilege to teach such students.

I have written in an earlier chapter about the interest which events in Russia had aroused in India. Some of us had a rough idea of what Socialism implied, but the literature normally available did not go much beyond the halting Socialism of the British Labour Party of those days. Many of us were anxious to study Marxism but it was difficult to know exactly where to begin. We were gradually pushing forward with our understanding of the theory and the philosophical basis but could not lay our hands on the living words, the current thought, that was moulding the destinies of millions of men in the contemporary world.

An opportunity came my way sometime in the autumn of 1922. A number of Muslims had left India about two or three years ago, as a protest against British policy as regards the Khilafat. They were called Mahajarin. They had hoped that Afghanistan, a Muslim country, would welcome them but these expectations were not realised. Some of them then drifted on to Russia, where they received much better treatment. They were trained as active agents and propagandists and very naturally came under the influence of M. N. Roy. Some of them then came back, hoping that their arrival had not been noticed.

One of these men was Shaukat Usmani. He had been a student of mine in Bikaner and had, at one time, been such an admirer of the Ali brothers that he changed his name to Mohammad Shaukat. Usmani found his way to Banaras and stayed in a hotel in a busy part of the town. He contacted me through a student of the Banaras Hindu University who had been a classmate of his in Bikaner. I received much first-hand information, some of it, no doubt, exaggerated, about Russia and the Revolution and, what is more important, received some up-to-date literature. The supply of such literature, both books and papers published in

Russia, never stopped since then. I cannot definitely say who smuggled it in and how, but in spite of the best efforts of the Police and the Customs authorities, the flow continued. At the worst, it was reduced to a thin trickle at times. Even many of those among us who were staunch Congressmen did not hesitate to act as agents for passing such proscribed goods from hand to hand.

Usmani remained in Banaras for some time. I then sent him to Shri Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi in Kanpur. Vidyarthi was a noble soul, a fearless adherent of truth and justice, a great editor and a good friend. As we know, he met his death at the hands of a Muslim assassin while rescuing Muslims during the communal riots of 1932. Kanpur had a large labour population and it was easy to keep one's identity concealed in such a locality. As a matter of fact, the Police were more vigilant than we had imagined. They were aware of every move of the Mahajarin and their friends and swooped down on them one fine morning in May 1923. Searches and arrests were made simultaneously in several places all over the country. My own house was also searched. There was a good deal of proscribed literature present in my room at the time, but my younger brother, Paripur-nand, aged twelve, had the presence of mind to throw the lot into a part of the house where the images of our family gods were housed, just before the Police came up. I, therefore, escaped being arrested. In the subsequent trial, letters from M. N. Roy were produced in court in which he had expressed the hope that Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru could be approached through me. It was also established beyond a doubt that Usmani had had contacts with me, but there was nothing to implicate me directly or prove that I had responded favourably to Communist overtures.

There was no regular Communist Party in the country at that time. This came later, when M. N. Roy returned home. There was, therefore, no question of anyone joining the Party but there can be no doubt that many of us were profoundly influenced by Communist thought. We knew that conditions in India were in many respects different from

those in Russia. In this country, for instance, there is nothing that corresponds even distantly to the established church in a European country. There would be no need for Indian revolutionaries to take up cudgels against religion. As a matter of fact, a number of religious heads had shown open sympathy with our movement and some had even courted imprisonment. This was only one of those fronts where a different approach from Russia was indicated.

An important question had come up before the public just then. The Swaraj Party had been established and stalwarts like Pt. Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan Das were advocating that Congressmen should enter the legislatures about to be established under the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme of reforms, to implement the technique of non-cooperation from within. The question was being hotly debated all over the country, which was sharply divided, so far as Congressmen were concerned, between pro-changers and no-changers; no-changers being persons who stuck to the old programme of boycotting the legislatures. I myself became a pro-changer at an early stage but decided that I would not seek election on the ticket of the Swaraj Party. I would go only if and when the Congress as such dropped its opposition to Council entry. This came in 1927.

I published a memorandum on the eve of the Gaya Session of the Congress which was to be presided over by Chitta Ranjan Das. In the memorandum, I suggested the programme which the Congress should adopt, one of the items being entry into the legislatures. Needless to say, the memorandum had the stamp of my studies of Communist literature.

There was a furious fight at Gaya between the proto-gonists and opponents of Council entry. The session went on far beyond the scheduled time and almost all the arrangements made by the Reception Committee broke down. The centre of the stage was taken by Muslim divines. They would go on quoting Qoran and its commentaries, the burden of the song being that Council entry was sinful.

We were surprised at the ingenuity with which the texts, obviously intended for a different purpose, were tortured to anathematise membership of the legislature. The torrent stopped when after several days and nights of apparently endless religious sermonising, one of us with a show of seriousness suggested that no decision should be taken without first ascertaining what the Pandits of Banaras had to say about the matter from the standpoint of Hinduism. It was then realized that religion had had too much of a say in the matter and we should come down to secular arguments.

As I have said, all arrangements had broken down. The speakers had also lost their voices, perhaps the only exception being Shri Rajagopalachari, who was an unbending no-changer. There were no loud speakers in those days. The services of Shri Shiva Prasad Gupta were requisitioned as a human amplifier. Himself a no-changer, he impartially repeated, in his powerful voice, the speeches uttered in low tones by prominent speakers on both sides. The decision that was ultimately taken was that while the Congress as such would keep aloof from the legislatures, those Congressmen who wished to stand on the Swaraj Party ticket were free to do so. They would not be opposed.

Communism had not gained many adherents but it had certainly gained in respectability. Many of the falsehoods uttered about it like the canard about the nationalisation of women had been uncovered and it had come to be recognised as a body of thought which favoured the destruction of imperialism, the emancipation of nationalities deprived of their freedom, and bettering the social, political and economic condition of the poor and the down-trodden.

VIII

1923-1929

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS were due to be held early in 1923 and the Provincial Congress Committee decided that they should be contested wherever possible. Congressmen, accordingly, stood for election in all important towns and not only secured a majority of seats but the Chairmanship as well. Lucknow, Allahabad, Kanpur, Banaras, all came under the control of Congressmen and we gained invaluable experience of administration in this way. In Banaras, our Chairman was Dr. Bhagavan Das. I represented the Chetganj Ward and was the Chairman of the Octroi, Public Health and Education Sub-Committees in successive years. In the latter capacity, I had occasion to select Shri Rameshwar Sahai Sinha as Superintendent of Education. He had resigned as Sub-Deputy Inspector of Schools — that is why he is popularly known as Deputy Sahib — and had been to prison in 1921. He joined all subsequent movements and was a great asset to the Congress organisation in Banaras. For three years, he was a member of the U.P. Legislative Assembly from Hardoi. Later, he was in charge of the department of Political Pensions for several years, in an honorary capacity. A deeply religious man, he is the Secretary of the Ram Tirtha Pratishtan, an institution which has as its objective the propagation of the teachings of Swami Ram Tirtha, the well-known Vedantic saint.

The Banaras Municipal Board won the confidence of the public by its firm but sympathetic administration. Our Chairman, as I have noted elsewhere, had his own ways of expression. Everyone, for instance, knows the word 'subordinate' but our vocabulary was enriched by the substitution of 'super-ordinate' and 'co-ordinate' for superior and equal. Similarly, "pre-cessor" took the place of 'predecessor', because etymologically the latter stands for one who dies before, not one who goes before. The

administration was toned up, income increased and meetings of the Board were conducted with a decorum which was a model for other Boards. But this was not to the liking of the official mind. In a letter to Government, dated January 22, the then Commissioner of the Banaras Division, Mr. Mumford, wrote about the members that "There is no evidence yet forthcoming that they have the experience or the ability to administer their charge with efficiency and economy" and recommended that "the safest course is to suspend the Board and appoint an experienced official to administer the city for a period of five years." The crushing reply which the Chairman sent on February 19, was not one which officialdom was likely to forget in a hurry. In any case, the Provincial Government proved more sensible than the Commissioner. His suggestion was turned down and the Board continued to serve the people for its full term of three years.

My daughter's marriage was celebrated in 1925. I refer to this domestic event because it was the cause of my first appearance before a Court as a party. A local newspaper, the *Surya*, published a note to the effect that the marriage of a member of the Municipal Board who is looked upon as a Rishi had been recently celebrated, and that some aluminium utensils had been taken in this connection from a manufacturer of such goods, with the result that a certain dispute about land in which that man had been involved with the Municipal Board had been settled in his favour. The insinuation was unmistakable and there was no other member to whom the paper could have referred. I filed a defamation suit against it. After one or two hearings, the editor sprung the proposal that the whole matter should be referred to Shri C. Y. Chintamani for arbitration. I was advised by my friends not to agree to the proposal, because Shri Chintamani was a prominent Liberal and this paper advertised itself as the mouthpiece of the Liberal Party of Banaras. It was a difficult choice but I decided to leave the matter to Shri Chintamani. My contention was that, in not accepting his name, I would be condemning the whole

body of Indian public men, irrespective of Party affiliations. My action would be tantamount to declaring that an Indian public man cannot rise above petty prejudices even when sitting in a judicial capacity. My faith was rewarded. Shri Chintamani decided in my favour and I won the case. Another domestic tragedy overtook me in this period, my mother's death in 1928. Unfortunately, I was not present at home at the time of her death. The funeral rites were performed by my youngest brother, Paripurnanand. Annapurnanand, our second brother, was in Europe at the time.

The Government of India had set up a Committee under Mr. Andrew Skeene to consider the question of opening a Military Academy in India for training Indians for Commissions in the Army. It was popularly known as the Indian Sandhurst Committee. Among its members were men like Pt. Motilal Nehru, Mr. Jinnah and Sir Feroze Sethna. Pandit Motilal selected me as his Secretary in connection with the Committee's business. The work was most interesting. Particularly interesting was the mentality displayed by the Indian officers who appeared as witnesses. Many of them were men who, after a brief training at Indore, had received emergency Commissions during the War. Most of them insisted that the distinction between martial and non-martial classes must be maintained and Army careers should not be thrown open to men from the non-martial communities. The Sikh witnesses were easily the worst. They referred with great contempt to the Khattris and Baniyas. I pointed out, with great respect to Pandit Motilalji, that the Sikh Gurus who had turned the Sikhs into a martial community were themselves Khattris, that marriages are permissible between Sikhs and non-Sikhs and any day a member of a so-called non-martial caste could change his religion and become a Sikh. It was, therefore, meaningless to speak about certain groups of people being martial or non-martial by birth. At first he refused to put questions based on these indubitable facts but the persistence with which Sikh witnesses continued to harp on their tune induced him to

change his tactics. This at once pulled them up. The record of the Skeene Committee's proceedings will bear witness to this.

The Congress having decided to contest the 1926 elections to the Legislature, I was selected to represent Banaras city and was elected with a comfortable majority over my Hindu Sabha rival. Those were the days of dyarchy when the administration was carried on by two sets of people, ministers responsible to the Legislature, in charge of the transferred subjects like Education, Local Self-Government and Agriculture; and Executive Councillors, responsible to the Governor, in charge of Police, Jails and General Administration. There were as many as twenty-three nominated members in a house of a little over one hundred and twenty; and the Secretaries to Government, all Europeans, were the real powers behind the throne. One spoke in the Legislature in those days with the real object of addressing them, not the figure-heads who occupied the ministerial seats.

The Opposition consisted of Congressmen, numbering 23, led by Pt. Govind Vallabh Pant and the Liberals numbering 22, led by Shri C. Y. Chintamani. I quote these numbers from memory. I was the Secretary of the Congress Party.

The first time I spoke in the House was to move a resolution to the effect that Military Education should be made compulsory in the Intermediate classes. I began my speech in Hindi but the Speaker, Dr. Sita Ram, pulled me up, the rule being that unless a member was unable to speak in English, he must use that language. In my heart, I was thankful to the President, because I was anxious that what I was going to say should be understood by the English members opposite. But as a Hindi writer I had to show preference to Hindi. I, therefore, protested mildly against the President's order and continued in English. The resolution was defeated, because the Government said that Defence was a Central subject and it would be *ultra vires* for the Provincial Government to implement my proposal. Some time later, a somewhat similar resolution was moved in the Central Legislature. The Government then opposed it on the

ground that Education being a Provincial subject, and being all-inclusive, the Central Government could do nothing about the matter! A few months later, I brought up my proposal again. This time the Provincial Government could not bring forward their old plea and the resolution was carried. Needless to say, the Government took no steps to implement it.

Shri Vithalbhai Patel was the President of the Central Legislature, and the manner in which, he, with his mastery of the Constitution, created one embarrassing situation after another for the Government is a brilliant chapter in our Parliamentary history.

One of the most important events of this period was the visit of the Simon Commission in 1928, sent out to suggest further constitutional reforms. It was decided by all parties to boycott the Commission but the dynamic part of the boycott, the demonstrations, naturally fell to the Congress. Respectable people like the Liberals could not possibly adopt such tactics. They contented themselves with not participating in functions held in honour of the Commission and refusing to tender evidence. The Commission had to work within certain definite limitations. It could not recommend anything approaching independence or the form of government obtaining in what used to be British Colonies, like Canada or Australia. The Statute of Westminster had made them virtually independent countries with a common king. It was unthinkable that, working within its terms of reference, the Simon Commission could think on these lines. But Indian public opinion, certainly opinion within the Congress, was not going to be satisfied with less. Ireland was free and had succeeded in reducing its connection with the Commonwealth to a negligibly tenuous thread. Egypt was also independent. India was chafing under its bonds and the appointment of the Simon Commission appeared to be like adding insult to injury.

The Commission received unwelcome attentions wherever it went. Agra and Lucknow showed it in no uncertain terms the temper of the people for whom it was supposed to

prepare a scheme of reforms. Nobody wanted such reforms. What happened in Banaras may give an idea of the general atmosphere. Here the authorities chose a particularly bad day for the Commission's visit. It was the Shiva Ratri when thousands flock to the City to worship at the temple of Vishwanath. Perhaps it was thought that everybody would be busy with the religious celebrations and the visit would pass off unnoticed. But this was not to be. A tapped telephone message gave us information of what was being planned. Thousands flocked to the station with black flags, shouting slogans like 'Simon, Go Back'. The authorities detained the Commission at a small station just before Banaras and took them to Sarnath to see the Buddhist ruins. In the meantime, the 'Mor-pankhi', the personal barge of the Maharaja of Banaras, with the image of a peacock on the front, was seen going down the river towards Rajghat. We inferred that it was proposed to take the Commission up the river to see the ghats. We at once requisitioned a motor-boat and rigged it up with placards bearing the usual boycott slogan. I was in charge of operations on this river front. Our guess proved correct. The Commission did board the Maharaja's barge and proceed up-stream. Just then, our motor failed and I had the mortification to see the barge proceeding quietly on its way. I cursed my fate and the motor and then it suddenly came to life. We at once raced the barge and kept between it and the ghats all through. The authorities committed another big mistake in taking the Commission through the City. They were recognised and with great difficulty escaped mobbing at the hands of the crowd.

The Commission's visit had repercussions in the Legislative Council also. The Ministers, Rai Rajeshwar Bali and Kunwar Rajendra Singh, belonged to the Liberal Party and, in pursuance of the Assembly's decision, refused to co-operate with the Commission. The Governor, Sir Alexander Muddiman, was compelled to dismiss them. But one of the members of the Liberal group, Raja Jaganath Bakhsh Singh, who had voted in the Assembly for the

Commission's boycott, was later persuaded to join the Government as a Minister. This naturally created great resentment against him and, at the Naini Tal session of the Legislature, a vote of no-confidence was brought against him. The Government naturally, used every device of temptation and intimidation to defeat the motion. It was carried, nevertheless.

The Congress decided that the time had come for Congressmen to come out of the Legislatures. We all resigned at the end of 1929.

IX

1930-1932

THE RISING tempo of public feeling, as evidenced among other things by the hot reception accorded to the Simon Commission, made it clear that a showdown of some kind could not be put off for long. People were not prepared to listen favourably to proposals involving anything less than complete independence. There had been some attempts in the past to place before the people some kind of a picture of what kind of Swaraj was visualised by our leadership. As Dr. Bhagavan Das said, Swaraj must be defined, so that every class of future citizen should know what rights he should expect and what liabilities he would be incurring when Swaraj came. It was hoped that such definition would bring about a clarification of ideas that would lead to maximisation of effort from all interests. In my opinion, the best document of the kind was the one produced jointly by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and Dr. Bhagavan Das. It was often called the Das-Das report. Some of its recommendations, those guaranteeing private property, for example, would naturally appear out of date today. It was submitted to the Congress but never formally adopted. Many of those who framed the existing Constitution were probably not even aware of its existence. But whatever the Constitutional set-up might be, the nation used the word 'Swaraj' in the sense of complete independence, complete severance of the British connection.

I should also like to invite attention in this connection to the book *Gandhian Constitution for Free India* by Shri Shriman Narayan Agarwal, now member of the Planning Commission. It appeared in 1945, with a foreword by Mahatma Gardhi in which he says, "I regard Principal Agarwal's to be a thoughtful contribution to the many attempts at presenting India with constitutions. The merit of his attempt

consists in the fact that he has done what for want of time I have failed to do."

It points out that the Indian Constitution should be framed with the background of Indian traditions which unfortunately most of our leaders have not cared to study. Indian political thought is contained mainly in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Manusmriti*, Kautilya's *Artha-Sastra* and Shukracharya's *Nitisara*. Drawing upon these sources, Shri S. N. Agarwal arrives at certain principles which had the approval of Gandhiji. He says that, with all its faults, democracy is better than all other systems but it is a negation of democracy to count only hands and not heads. Votes must not only be counted but weighed. The present system in which caucuses control votes must go and for this purpose large constituencies must be substituted by small ones. The two essentials of democracy are non-violence and decentralisation, restoring to the Panchayats the power which they possessed before British policy broke them up. The Provincial and Central Legislatures should be indirectly built up from the District Panchayats and Municipal Councils. Special qualifications should be laid down for those who are to be elected.

It is needless to add that the principles laid down in this book were never seriously considered by our leadership, Gandhiji's blessings notwithstanding.

It was in the power of the British Government to improve matters even at that stage but imperialism would not be what it is if it were not wooden-headed. On the 31st of October, 1929, Lord Irwin, on the eve of his departure for England, made a statement whose last sentence read "I am authorised on behalf of his Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status." This reference to Dominion Status was not very encouraging, as it seemed to point to that consummation as a goal to be achieved at some distant date. But Indian leaders were prepared to go very far indeed to accommodate

the Government. Within less than twenty-four hours of the Declaration, a number of leading politicians met in Delhi to consider it. This All-Parties Group issued a manifesto which, in its very first sentence, stated "We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Status suitable to India's needs." A Round Table Conference was proposed to be held in London to which Indian leaders had been invited. With regard to this Conference, the joint manifesto said, "We understand that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India." In a letter written to some English friends, Mahatmaji stated "I have meant every word of the joint manifesto. . . . The letter of a document is nothing, if the spirit of it is preserved in effect. I can wait for a Dominion Constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. That is to say, if there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service." But this was not to be. It soon became apparent that the British Government and its agents were not prepared to interpret Lord Irwin's statement as Indians interpreted it. There was no intention to transfer power in any conceivably near future. This was made clear when a number of Indian leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Shri Vithalbhai Patel, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Shri Jinnah met the Viceroy on 23rd December, 1929. Unfortunately, there had been a bomb accident to the Viceregal train that morning at a short distance from Delhi. Naturally, the assembled leaders expressed their gratification at the Viceroy's escape and their strong disapproval of terrorist activities. It was when the conversation finally turned to the real business in hand that the cordial atmosphere maintained so far became strained. Gandhiji wanted a clear assurance that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of the establishment of full Dominion Status. Lord Irwin stated that

he could make no such promise. This was unequivocal. It was evident that the Round Table Conference was being held merely to waste time and deceive Indians with something very far removed from what the nation was in the mood to accept.

The topmost leadership of the Congress had not so far been particularly keen to stress the question of complete independence. There could be no going back after making such a declaration and the tactics to be adopted would also have to be made more dynamic. In 1921, the struggle was essentially negative in character. We did what the British Government said should not be done, the enrolment of volunteers to be quite specific, but now a more positive programme, an aggressive movement, would have to be initiated. One can understand the hesitation of the leadership. Perhaps, they were not prepared to go quite so far or they considered that the people were not ideologically prepared to undertake all the risks which such a struggle would involve. But they had little choice. The British Government's duplicity had finally shut the doors on any other alternative. Moreover, their hands were forced and they had to yield to the pressure of public opinion as reflected in the Congress. On December 31, 1929, the Independence resolution was moved at the Lahore session of the Congress by Mahatma Gandhi himself and carried unanimously at midnight. Tumultuous scenes of jubilation followed the passing of the resolution. Unmindful of the intense cold, delegates sang and danced with joy in the open air. The country had openly declared its will to be free. A 'Declaration of Independence' was, later, drafted by the Working Committee, to be simultaneously read at public meetings all over the country, exactly at five o'clock in the evening, on January 26, 1930. Since that year, this date was always celebrated as Independence Day. It is now called the Republic Day, since our new Republican Constitution came into effect from 26th January, 1950.

The declaration, as drafted by the Working Committee, was in English. Shri Sri Prakasa and I had the privilege of

translating it in Hindi at the *Pratap* Office, Kanpur, where we were staying as the guests of Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. It was this version which was read at Independence Day meetings in northern India. Certain portions of the Declaration are well worth repetition:

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete Independence. . . . We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. . . . We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes.

The die was cast; but the next question and, in the circumstances, the most important one was what programme are we going to adopt to implement this decision? Naturally, and almost automatically, the leadership of the movement fell to Gandhiji and it was up to him to evolve a technique for the fight. When he unfolded his plans, their very simplicity and audacity took everyone's breath away. No one, and certainly not the Government, could have thought of such a thing. Many people, and some of the most prominent Congress leaders among them, pooh-poohed the idea but he stood firm and the programme was adopted.

His thesis was that salt is almost as much a necessity of life as air or water. It is also a free gift of nature. No government, therefore, has a right to tax it and the people have the absolute right to procure it wherever they can, free of all control. He, therefore, organised a raid on the Government's salt works at Dandi and advised people to manufacture salt wherever they could. The raid on Dandi was to come after a long march of several days. This allowed

ample scope for propaganda. Of course, what was important was not the amount of salt manufactured or seized but the psychology generated by the affair and the habit of breaking the laws deliberately and voluntarily, inviting punishment on one's self. It is this factor which appealed to popular imagination and the salt laws were easy to break, as material for making illicit salt was available everywhere.

Both sides were better prepared than in 1921. The Independence Resolution had been passed on December 31, 1929 and the Declaration of Independence read out on January 26. The movement was actually started in April. There may have been uncertainty about the programme but the Government had been able to make some assessment of the temper of the people and Mahatmaji's influence. They had accordingly organised their Police and Jail services to cope with the probable situation. The Congress also had ample time to organise its forces. The arrangements we made in Banaras, which I shall describe later, will give an idea of the general plan. The time for starting the movement had been well chosen. No large-scale agricultural operations were in progress and village man-power could also be freely drawn upon. The chief item of the programme was, if anything, more suitable for rural areas than urban localities because it was easier to find sources there from which salt could be extracted. That it was not likely to be pure table-salt was not at all a matter of importance.

We had made preparations for a long and stiff fight. It was apprehended that Congress Committees from top to bottom would be declared unlawful associations and would not be able to function openly. Their funds would be seized and communications rendered difficult, if not impossible. Each district had, therefore, to depend on its own resources. Volunteers were enrolled to be sure but it was anticipated that a much larger number than the regularly enlisted volunteers would take part in the campaign. In every district, the Congress Committee nominated a dictator who was vested with full authority to conduct the campaign as he thought best. He selected his own

lieutenants and nominated his own successor who in his turn was invested with similar powers. Of course, the name of the successor was kept a secret till the occasion arose for him to step into office. Communication was mostly through secret messengers; where the regular mail service was used at all, messages used to be in code. I shall give an example of one such message. It was on an open post-card, for the Censor who checked our mail to examine to his heart's content, and simply conveyed the information that the pieces of Khadi ordered by the addressee would be despatched in a day or two. As a matter of fact, what was being sent was a batch of volunteers, not pieces of cloth. I had the honour of being appointed the first dictator both by the Banaras City and District Congress Committees. I was assisted in my work by a band of trusted workers whose resourcefulness and courage could be a source of inspiration to anyone charged with such responsibility as was placed on my shoulders. An example will show the kind of men I had been fortunate enough to gather round me. Shri T. N. Singh, Member, Planning Commission, was at that time editor of a Hindi paper. I called him one evening and told him "Tribhuvan, I want you for Congress work. You have to resign." He simply said "Very well, Professor Saheb" — my students of the Kashi Vidyapitha still call me Professor Saheb — and sent in his resignation the next day. It was the work and worth of such men which earned for Banaras the reputation of being one of the foremost localities in the country in this campaign. And our volunteers were, many of them, solid gold. The example which I shall give a little later will show the stuff of which they were made.

The campaign in the city started on April 6. Our mode of operation was this. Every morning a batch of volunteers would march through a part of the city previously notified. Their number was generally eleven but sight-seers would swell their numbers to several hundred. I accompanied the procession but the volunteers were in immediate charge of a group-leader selected for the day. By the forenoon, we

would converge on Sonia, a piece of open ground near the Kashi Vidyapitha. We had selected it as the field of our anti-Salt Law operations. Some earth was brought from the debris of an old house not far from this place, which chemical analysis had proved to contain a high percentage of salt. It was probably mixed up with a fair proportion of nitre also but we did not mind this. What mattered was the symbolic breach of the Law. The earth was mixed with water and set to boil in a big iron cauldron, after being strained to remove solid particles of insoluble dust. A big crowd would watch the proceedings with interest which was naturally heightened by expectation of drastic police action. As scum formed on the surface it was removed. When the water had boiled away, the salt was deposited at the bottom. Many people paid fancy prices for small quantities and some seemed to cherish a pinch of the salt almost as a sacred relic. The volunteers used to take their food on the spot and disperse in the evening.

This went on for five days. On the sixth, the Police swooped down upon us. The number of volunteers was the same as usual. Some of them were exceptionally young. Their leader was the late Dr. Amar Nath Banerji, one of the senior-most medical men of the City. The Police force numbered about fifty. They wanted to seize the contraband salt but the problem was how to get it? It was all in the cauldron, a boiling liquid in an iron utensil on the fire. To prevent the Police from seizing it, the volunteers took the cauldron from the fire with their bare hands and pressed it down on the earth. It was a sight for the gods to see. They were scalded and burnt but would not let go. The Police, on the other hand, hovered round the volunteers and avoided touching the hot solution and its container. It was after half-an-hour's bitter struggle that they succeeded in wresting it from the volunteers and carrying it off in their van. It was a gallant fight that these boys put up, eleven against fifty with many of them badly burnt. The world does not remember this episode but, if India is independent today, the credit for this goes to anonymous heroes like

these whose common clay Gandhiji's alchemy had turned into the finest gold.

I had decided to begin the campaign in the rural areas on April 13. Phesura, a village in Chandauli Tahsil, a subdivision of Banaras, was selected for the purpose. Shri Sri Prakasa and I reached there in the forenoon. The usual procedure for manufacturing salt was gone through. The Police were present near the place in force and we had received intimation through a secret source that they had warrants for arresting some of us. When the salt was ready, they attacked us. This time our volunteers had profited by what had happened in Banaras. They introduced a thick piece of bamboo in the ears of the cauldron and pressed it down, instead of using their bare hands for the purpose. This saved them from receiving burns. The Police managed to seize the cauldron after a struggle. We had taken some first-aid material with us and treated both our volunteers and the police constables for the few simple burns which could not be avoided. After the salt had been seized, the Police produced their warrants and arrested Shri Sri Prakasa and myself as well as the local leader, Shri Chandrika Sharma.

This ended the first phase of the struggle. It continued for some months. Every important worker found himself in prison. Fairly heavy sentences were imposed. My own sentences, for instance, totalled two years and a half under various sections of the Penal Code but, as some of the sentences were concurrent, the actual period to be spent in jail came to eighteen months.

What happened in Banaras was more or less true of other places also, particularly in our province. The total number of those arrested probably came to over a lakh, but as some people were released, perhaps for want of proper evidence, the number of those who were actually kept in jail was in the neighbourhood of eighty thousand.

Gradually, the movement lost some of its driving force and the number of those breaking the laws and offering themselves for arrest slowed down but it did not cease

completely at any time. A fairly large number of those who came out of prison courted arrest again. This was particularly true of the regular volunteers and the leaders. It was also possible and easy to add new items to the original Salt Satyagraha. Prohibition being one of the flanks of the Congress platform, picketing of liquor shops could always be undertaken as a change, whenever such a diversion appeared desirable.

The trial of Satyagrahi prisoners was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the technicalities of the law-court. It must be conceded that Congress prisoners themselves contributed largely towards making the proceedings a farce. The courts would have imposed heavy sentences in any case but they would have observed the formalities. This was rendered impossible. The statement made by every one of us was: "I do not recognise this court and shall, therefore, not take any further part in the proceedings." Some contented themselves with this short and dignified statement. Others made their statements a little longer. Still others, however, would raise slogans or recite poetry which would completely destroy the dignity and decorum of the court-room. But for the sake of the record, some formalities had to be observed. The Police had to produce at least two witnesses. Respectable witnesses did not come forward to help them. So professional witnesses with completely false stories had to be brought in. As there was no cross questioning, whatever they said went through. Some of the witnesses gave the impression that they were not at all happy to play this role and gave away hints which, under the most elementary cross-examination, would have proved them to be unreliable men. In the course of our own trial, one of my co-accused asked one of the witnesses, "Is it a fact that you appear as a police witness, in all cases?" The reply was: "not in all cases but I have appeared in eight or ten cases." One further question elicited the fact that his services had been requisitioned when someone had had to be indicted for forging a document or storing cocaine or some similar charge involving moral turpitude.

Our time in prison was spent mostly in reading books, but some of our friends did a good deal of spinning. A word about *tikram* would not be out of place. The word means 'subterfuge' or 'trick' in a general way but in jail, and it is in jail that the word is most commonly used, it means any stratagem for smuggling things in or out of prison or otherwise hoodwinking the authorities. With the exception of a few who considered it sinful to depart from jail regulations and a violation of the strict code of conduct applicable to Satyagrahis, the great majority of Congressmen in prison had absolutely no scruples in this matter. But they drew the line in different places. Some would not mind getting in favourite articles of food, others would smuggle in only tobacco in one form or another. I was among those who did not use the machinery of *tikram* for any purpose other than smuggling in newspapers which the Government had foolishly banned. It was an expensive taste, single issues costing twice the normal price. This could hardly be called unreasonable, seeing that the warders who handled the business had to run great risks. Once the paper reached us, the problem was how to read and then destroy it. There was a warder posted in our compound all the twenty-four hours. But we managed to perform these difficult feats, nonetheless. Being a fast reader, I was entrusted with the task of reading the paper and noting down the principal news. Of course, all this was done at night. While taking our meals, we were comparatively free from espionage and I would then read out my notes. Disposal of the used newspaper was comparatively easy, as some cooking was always done in our barrack.

Some time after the start of the movement, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Shri Jayakar began to make efforts to mediate between the Congress and the Government. But their attempt proved fruitless, at any rate, in the beginning. Such efforts were, however, continued and finally bore fruit in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the agreement arrived at in between Mahatma Gandhi on behalf of the Congress and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on behalf of the Government of India. Swaraj had not been achieved but it was the first

time that something like a negotiation on equal terms was carried on between the representatives of the Indian people and the British Government. The people learnt the value of concerted effort as no other way could have taught them. They learnt the value of sacrifice and suffering willingly undergone in a great cause and showed courage of which the common man would not have been considered capable. Our secret organisation would have crumbled to the dust if the humble men in charge of our offices and communications had yielded to temptation. But, though the temptation was great, there was no betrayal. Our secret presses where secret bulletins and handbills were printed, went on and contact with Central and Provincial centres was maintained unbroken. I am saying this not only for this movement but for subsequent movements also. There was no need for secrecy in 1921 but, when the necessity did present itself in 1930 and later, we were prepared for it. In fact, the feeling that they were engaged in a battle of wits with the secret agents of the Police added zest to the movement in the eyes of the younger men.

It may be worthwhile to recapitulate some of the principal items of the Gandhi-Irwin pact. They are as under: The Civil Disobedience movement will be withdrawn and the Government will withdraw ordinances issued or prosecutions launched in this connection; all fines that have not been realised will be remitted; all confiscated property, unless duly sold, will be returned; officials who had resigned will be reinstated unless their posts have been filled up, and people in areas where salt can be conveniently manufactured will be allowed to do so for their use.

In consequence, the movement was called off and there was a general jail delivery within a few days.

The cessation of activities was only a lull before the storm. Neither side had gained its objective, nor did either side feel so exhausted as not to think of resuming the fight at the earliest opportunity. An excellent illustration of the mentality of the two sides was provided by an incident in Banaras itself. Phesura, the village to which reference

has already been made, as the place where the anti-Salt Act campaign was initiated for the rural areas, was the scene of acute tension between the landlord and the tenants. We of the Congress tried to intervene and get the dispute settled but the district authorities were also trying their hand at the same game. This complicated matters because neither side looked with favour on interference by the other. About this time, Dr. Bhagavan Das gave a party to which he invited both officials and non-officials. His main object was to bring Congressmen and District Officers together. Inevitably, the question of Phesura came up. Mr. Finlay, the District Magistrate said, — I am quoting his words from memory — “We and you fully understand one another. You want to settle this matter without our help and we want to settle it without yours. We both feel that there will be a clash again. We shall try to crush you and you will try to pulverise us.” I heartily endorsed what he said. Dr. Bhagavan Das was shocked but Mr. Finlay was speaking the barest truth.

Preparations as in 1930 went on apace. We had learnt quite a few things from the previous campaign and were trying to fill in the lacunae. There were no overt hostilities. The Round Table Conference was being held in London and Mahatmaji was attending it as the sole representative of the Congress. Nothing much was expected from its deliberations, but neither the Government nor the Congress wanted to do anything to earn the obloquy for spoiling the atmosphere.

But trouble was brewing and the situation was getting more and more tense. Our own Province had become the focus of attention. We felt that the economic situation demanded a reduction in rents. Rents were paid directly to the Zamindars and Taluqedars, but a reduction in rent would necessitate a reduction in the land revenue received by the Government from the landlords. What was really weighing with them was the principle involved. It would be a dangerous precedent to accept a demand sponsored by the Congress. What the Government proposed was that rents should be deposited in full and, at the same time, an

enquiry instituted. If the enquiry established the fact that the peasantry could not really bear the burden, suitable refunds would be made. We were agreeable to an enquiry being held but contended that payments should be made after the inquiring body had made its recommendations. Payment beforehand would prejudice the enquiry as it would prove the Kisans' capacity to pay. The Government were adamant and so were we. In consequence, the Executive Council of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee decided to launch a no-rent campaign. Some of us, I among them, felt that such a campaign would not be very successful. The Government was sure to take away holdings in lieu of arrears of rent and sell them to others. The Kisan would thus lose for ever his only means of livelihood. But the majority was in favour of the campaign and the decision was adopted. I had a dual responsibility. Besides being again selected as the Dictator for Banaras, I was also the head of the Hindustani Seva Dal, the trained Volunteer organisation, for the whole province.

Mahatmaji was arrested just after his return from England from the Round Table Conference. The Government had arranged to arrest many prominent Congress leaders within a day or two, so that the organisation would be reduced to a leaderless army which would collapse within a few days. The operative part of their plan was executed successfully but the hope on which it was based was not realized because it depended on factors which were beyond the control of the Government. Many people in other parts of the country felt that the United Provinces had unnecessarily provoked the Government and forced this fight on the whole country. Be this as it may, the struggle was now on. The no-rent campaign in itself was not much of a success except in a few localities but the movement went on. It gathered momentum and new items were continually added to the programme. This was a necessity, at any rate so far as urban areas were concerned. The picketing of liquor shops was a very popular item. In some places people cut down the toddy-palm trees from which toddy-juice, which easily

ferments into toddy, is extracted. Picketing of foreign cloth was another popular item. As a matter of fact, when people are spoiling for a fight, it is not difficult to invent excuses. I was sentenced this time to a term of six months' rigorous imprisonment. This meant that I was entitled to remissions for good conduct.

I was released in July 1932. The movement happened to be at a low ebb at the time. Apart from the fact that the season was one in which the cultivator is engaged in intensive agricultural operations, there was an important psychological factor which served to damp enthusiasm. Some of the big leaders on release from prison found themselves in a state of health necessitating a visit to Europe. This was interpreted as a disinclination to continue the struggle. In a fight like ours where all work is voluntary, any show of weakness on the part of the leadership has a disastrously demoralising effect. We in our province, therefore, felt that it was up to us to stem the tide and this could only be done by our taking the earliest opportunity to court imprisonment again. This was not particularly difficult, for the Government was not prepared to allow anyone to put fresh coal on what it believed to be a dying fire. Anyone who resumed his activities was sure to be hauled up. According to an arrangement made between ourselves, Acharya Narendra Deva was the first to go. My turn came next. I was arrested for the offence of disobeying an order to leave Banaras by noon next day. After about a month and a half of freedom, I found myself in prison again, this time for twelve months.

The movement went on for some months more but gradually its momentum was exhausted and came to a sort of natural end. This time also, our province sent about eighty thousand men to prison. Our contribution I believe, was the highest in the whole country. It is little known that for some time, Banaras had the distinction of housing the offices of the All India and the Provincial Congress organisations besides its own, and its secret press printed the literature which guided and inspired the whole country.

This was a challenge to the Police but they utterly failed to unearth these secret ramifications.

It was possible to observe so much secrecy because of the popular sympathy we enjoyed. There were a good many people who knew something about our secret work and knew our agents and there were a good many more whose suspicions, if communicated to the Police, would have given enough clues to track us down. Everywhere in the villages, volunteers could be sure of receiving shelter and a meal. In the city itself, the citizens had set up a very elaborate organisation for the service of the volunteers. A big sum was spent on the arrangements made for supplying food to the volunteers, several hundred of whom would be on duty simultaneously for several hours at a stretch, leaving them no time to cook their own meals. Liberal contributions in cash and kind were made and this aid continued for months. It may be noted that we had a good number of women also among our workers. Those of us who had taken an active part in Congress work those days can never forget some of these lady workers, Giribala, for instance. She came of a well-to-do family in Bengal, several members of which held high offices under Government. But she refused to live with them because they derived their income from the tainted money they received from the Government. The spirit of noble patriotism which made her deliberately adopt poverty when she could have lived in easy circumstances and her devotion to duty were a standing example to others.

Our jail experiences this time were of a nature different from 1921 and, to some extent, even from 1930. Hunger-strikes for the redress of grievances were no novelty but life in prison was in many places more difficult than on previous occasions and clashes with authority were more frequent, more prolonged and more bitter. In Rae Bareilly jail to which I was sent after being sentenced early in 1932, things were specially bad. The Jailer was a person whose attitude towards Satyagrahis was most unsympathetic. There were three of us in the superior class, the A class as it was called

and we were separated from the bulk of political prisoners, nearly three hundred of whom were in the C class. Differences over petty matters continued to pile up and one day some of our men were assaulted by habitual criminals at the instigation of jail officials. This brought matters to a head and all Satyagrahis decided to go on an indefinite hunger-strike. This was serious. Segregated as we were, we sent word to them to give this up. Hunger-strike is a serious matter and it is not possible for every one to continue it for long. The jail authorities bring some cooked food into the barrack both morning and evening and the sight and smell of it further weakens resistance. The result is that first one man breaks down and then another; soon there is a regular stampede. The demoralisation that follows is terrible: everyone feels dispirited and, as happens in such cases, blames everyone else. This is why we warned our comrades against launching a hunger-strike. We asked them to put up resistance in any other way they chose and promised to remain on hunger-strike as long as their resistance lasted, although we had no grievances of our own. This state of affairs continued for a week. We continued the hunger-strike and others continued to refuse jail orders, inviting physical violence and humiliation on themselves. They were beaten by habituels, trampled under foot, kicked and put into fetters. The Superintendent of the Prison, an officer of the Higher Medical Service, turned a blind eye on all this. News of these happenings percolated outside in an exaggerated form. It was rumoured that I was being subjected to such treatment and shops closed in Banaras in protest. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya wrote to the Government. All this had its effect. On instructions from above, this kind of ill-treatment ceased and a kind of truce was patched up, removing some of the most glaring grievances. Our sympathetic hunger-strike also came to an end.

After my second imprisonment, I was again sent to this jail but the authorities wrote to the Government: "His presence has an undesirable influence on political prisoners." Within a week, I was transferred to Jhansi. Here, I was

placed in the erstwhile European barrack, situated in the jail garden. Life here was comparatively more peaceful. There were one or two minor incidents but they were not allowed to develop into anything serious, because both the Superintendent and the Jailer were sensible and peace-loving men.

The movement, as I have stated earlier, was gradually petering out. By the time, I came out of prison at the end of my second term, it was practically over. There seemed to be a dead calm, so far as political activity was concerned.

X

A SEMI-POLITICAL INTERLUDE,

1933-34

IN THE prevailing state of affairs, it was not possible to initiate any Satyagraha activities. A few of us could have gone to prison again, but this would have been little better than an escapist action. Real generalship, at times like these, consists in taking steps likely to enthuse the people and raise their morale. Some of us, the late Shri Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Acharya Kripalani, the late Acharya Narendra Deva and myself and some others, met and decided to take up two items of work. The first was to look into the grievances of cane-growers who had to take their cane to the sugar factories in Eastern U.P. Most of the factories provided no sheds for the cattle which pulled the bullock-carts with the result that these had often to remain for several hours exposed to the sun and the cold winter night. Sanitary arrangements, where they existed at all, were most primitive and the supply of water most inadequate. The weighing-bridges were generally defective and weighing was done in such a leisurely manner that cane often remained unweighed for days. It would dry up, as a result, and lose weight, meaning under-payment for the cultivator. The remarkable fact was that, on the whole, there were fewer complaints about mills owned by Europeans. The millowners got alarmed by these things being brought to light. They were afraid that we would engineer some kind of an agitation which would bring about a stoppage of their mills in the midst of the crushing season. The result was that they agreed to introduce a number of the most important reforms at once. The Government looked askance at this development but it could hardly intervene in a matter of this kind.

The second item of work taken up by us was of greater political significance. During 1930-32, the tenantry in some localities had had to undergo much suffering and

humiliation. Their landlords had indulged in unrestrained vendetta against them for having listened to the Congress, voted for Congress candidates or raised their voices in protest against excesses committed against them by their lords and masters. The Police and magistracy had looked on with supreme indifference and in some places actively collaborated with the landlords. We now decided to collect instances of such acts with full details and submit our reports to the Provincial Congress organization which would later publish them. If the authorities even then did nothing to redress grievances, they would be stultifying themselves. At any rate, we should have placed all the facts before the public.

Our *modus operandi* was to divide ourselves in batches of two, placed in charge of investigations in specified districts which were notified several days in advance of our arrival. Detailed enquiries spreading over several days were held. The active association of Congress volunteers with this work did much to revive their morale and self-respect.

Acharya Narendra Deva and myself were in charge of the districts of Deoria and Gorakhpur. A number of instances of glaring injustice and high-handedness were brought to our notice, but *Siswa Bazar* in Gorakhpur brought to light the most shameless incident of naked negation of all law, with the open connivance of the local officials, that has ever come to my knowledge. The local *Zemindars* — they were two brothers — had a grouse against the tenantry of a village at some distance from the town. They decided to teach these men a lesson. One day, they marched to the village at midday at the head of a body of their armed followers, accompanied by some bullock-carts. There is a police station in the town but the police looked on supinely, supremely indifferent to what was going on. The village was thoroughly looted of all available grain, cash and ornaments and the men thoroughly beaten. The army then triumphantly marched back to the town, with the plundered property in the bullock-carts which had been thoughtfully

taken along. The Police took no notice. Some villagers had managed to run away and reached the town late in the evening with the intention of seeking redress at the hands of the authorities. The Zemindar's men were on the look-out for them. They were caught and brought to the Zemindar's residence, where they were forced to sign hand-notes for loans they were supposed to have taken. This fact, again, failed to attract the attention of the local or district authorities.

It was difficult to believe that such things could have happened but the proofs were so overwhelming that every detail of the incident was established to the hilt. We had no right to interrogate officials, but the Zemindars could not deny their guilt. They were afraid that now that we had taken up this matter, it would probably go to the Courts and the District Magistrate or the Police would not be able to give them any protection. They tried, therefore, to make a virtue out of necessity. The forced hand-notes were destroyed and at least part of the looted property was restored. The rest apparently could not be traced. They promised to help rehabilitate the families which had been ruined. I am not sure if anything substantial was done in this connection but, in any case, the result of our enquiry was a great moral victory. On the one hand it showed up the official machinery as willing to condone the worst offences committed by its satellites, on the other, it established the position of the Congress as the sole champion of the oppressed.

When the report of these incidents was first published, people found it difficult to believe them. That such things were being done behind the facade of law and order which the authorities were claiming to maintain against the onslaughts of the Congress came as a revelation. The newspapers had either never heard of them or been too afraid to report them. Such apologia as local officials attempted convinced no one. The Government could not have been unaware of what was being done by its agents but these agents were expected to be more circumspect. The publication of such accounts was naturally very embarrassing.

Matters did not rest here. As we know, Mahatmaji carried on a long correspondence with the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, about the unlawful acts committed or permitted to be committed by the authorities. The correspondence included a charge-sheet giving details of what Mahatmaji felt to be the worst cases that had come to his knowledge. Our report on Siswa Bazar formed a part of this charge-sheet and, thus, received much greater publicity than it might otherwise have secured. The charge-sheet did more to discredit the authorities than mere assertions of political leaders would have done.

Reports compiled by other observers confirmed our own findings. The landlords had had a field-day for the past two years and had not only made unjustified exactions but taken every possible step to break the spirit of the countryside. Officials had looked on, thankful that their hands were unsoiled and that this dirty work was being done for them by unpatriotic men ready to pledge their souls to the Devil for the pleasure of the Government. Activities of this kind went a long distance towards restoring the morale of the Congress worker: he felt that there was work waiting for him to be taken up. It was he alone who could stand up for the weak and the helpless and, in many cases, it was possible for him to see that justice was done.

XI

THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

THE ESTABLISHMENT of the Congress Socialist Party was a very important chapter in Congress history and, though the Party is now defunct, it has left its permanent impression on the institution. It did not come into existence on the sudden impulse of a group of comparatively unknown youngmen who were dissatisfied with the older leaders, nor had Pt. Jawaharlal anything to do with it. He tried to exploit it once or twice but, on the whole, his attitude towards it was one of amused contempt.

Among intellectuals all over the country, the study of socialist literature had gone on apace. It was not confined only to the propagandist publications received from Russia but covered a wide field. There were many people who had seriously begun to think of the post-independence period. They were coming round to the opinion that some kind of a socialistic pattern would have to be adopted if India was to make social, political and economic progress. It was also felt that the adoption of a socialist objective would rally the lower middle classes, the landless peasantry, the mill-hands and other socially and economically backward classes to the ranks of the Congress in our final fight for freedom which was bound to come sooner, rather than later.

Thinking on these lines was independent, groups in different localities not being aware of the work being done elsewhere. There were at least four places where a small body of socialists was gradually growing up, Bombay (including Maharashtra), Patna, Banaras and Kerala. The most prominent men among the Bombay group were Yusuf Mehr Ali, M. R. Masani and Achyut Patwardhan. This group is now no more. Mehr Ali, a prince among men, is dead; Masani is a brilliant public man but he has now joined the Swatantra Party and is anything but a Socialist; and Patwardhan has dedicated himself to Theosophy. The

Patna group was led and inspired by Shri Jai Prakash Narain and the most prominent representative of Kerala was Namboodripad, now a Communist, who was recently the Chief Minister of the State.

I shall speak at a slightly greater length about the Banaras group. It will be interesting to trace the growth of the Party from humble beginnings. As long ago as March 1930, I had elaborated a Socialist programme for adoption by the Congress after assumption of power by it on the departure of the British. It was published in the form of a booklet with the title *When We Are In Power*. It was widely distributed but no one paid any attention to it, except the Government. I came to learn later that the Government had made a serious study of it and used it as an argument to turn the Zemindars against the Congress, because I had proposed the abolition of Zemindari. The main suggestions of the book — they are at least of historical interest now — were as follows :

1. Abolition of Zemindari with compensation.
2. Consolidation of holdings.
3. Nationalisation of key industries and principal means of transport.
4. Fixation of minimum wages and maximum hours of work.
5. Provision of work or maintenance, also, old-age pensions.
6. Every woman to have leave on full pay, one month before and after accouchement.
7. Food and free elementary education to be provided by the State to every child whose parents cannot afford this.
8. Total Prohibition.
9. No Salt Tax.

Interest in Socialism was growing apace and people felt that somehow Socialism would provide a break-through from the dead end which Congress strategy seemed to have reached. In Banaras, as elsewhere, there were members of the intelligentsia who were students of Socialism and were thinking in terms of acting as an organised body. A group of nine such men, including myself, met one evening in early summer, 1934, at my residence and decided to form a Socialist Party. Of this group, only four men are still in the

field of Politics, Shri Tarapada Bhattacharya, now a member of the Praja Socialist Party, Shri Kamalapati Tripathi, my brother Paripurnanand and myself. Contacts between socialist-minded groups were informally established and there was a conference in Patna, under the chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva, at which it was decided to hold a formal conference at the time of the next session of the Congress which was to be held in Bombay, and form a regular Socialist Party within the Congress. Before that, it was necessary to form Provincial Congress Socialist Parties which would federate to form the All-India Congress Socialist Party in Bombay.

The Bombay Session of the Congress was held in October 1934, in a spacious pandal near the beach. The Socialist gathering took place in Readymoney Hall on October 21 and 22, with me as the President. A constitution was adopted and the Congress Socialist Party came formally into existence. It would be worthwhile to recall the sections of the Constitution dealing with the objects and rules of membership.

OBJECTS

The objects of the Party shall be achievement of Complete Independence in the sense of separation from the British Empire, and the establishment of a socialist society.

MEMBERSHIP

The Party shall consist of members of the Indian National Congress who are members of a Provincial Congress Socialist Party affiliated to the Party, provided that they are not members

- (a) of any communal organisation or
- (b) of any other political organisation whose objects and programme are in the opinion of the Party inconsistent with its own.

The Party's programme was divided under three main heads: Objective, Plan of Action and Immediate Demands. Fifteen items came under the first head, chief among them being

Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
Socialisation of key and principal industries.

State monopoly of foreign trade.

Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.

Encouragement and promotion of co-operative and collective farming by the State.

'To everyone according to his needs and from everyone according to his capacity' to be the basis ultimately of distribution and production of economic goods.

Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State.

The Plan of Action contemplated the following, among other activities:

Work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure acceptance by it of the objects and programme of the Party.

Organisation of peasant and labour unions.

Active opposition to imperialist wars and the utilization of such and other crises for the intensification of the national struggle.

Convening, after the capture of power, of a Constituent Assembly elected by local committees of deputies of workers, peasants and other exploited classes.

There were thirty items listed under Immediate Demands but there was nothing particularly novel or revolutionary about them.

Anyone who has followed the resolutions passed by subsequent sessions of the Congress and the policies adopted by Congress Governments will notice how the Party, at its very first session, anticipated many of them. As a matter of fact, we have yet to implement many of the ideas then placed before the country for the first time.

An Executive Committee was elected with Shri Jayaprakash Narayan as the General Secretary. I was one of its members. I must say that this Committee consisted of men with whom it was a pleasure to work. The sense of comradeship generated by work in the Party was something rarely noticed in Congress Committees. We were not only fighters for freedom but apostles of a new age, a new orientation of human life, a new mission and the hostility to which we were subjected by most of the old leaders cemented our bonds of comradeship still more firmly.

This hostility was marked from the very beginning. The old leaders — I can think of only two exceptions, Mahatmaji and Rajendra Babu — considered the Party a challenge to their authority and did everything in their power to snub it and reduce it to impotence. The Party, on its part, did little to soften this feeling. One of the resolutions passed at this session states : “This Conference takes note of the concerted attempts of the right-wing to take back the Congress to the discredited path of constitutional agitation and to convert it into an instrument of the Indian upper classes in their bargains with British Imperialism.” Clashes continued to occur all through the year. Acharya Narendra Deva and I were the two seniormost members of the Party from the point of view of membership of the Congress. Acharyaji was keeping particularly bad health that year. The asthma from which he was a chronic sufferer had come out in a particularly acute form. I was, therefore, forced to come into the forefront of the fight with the leadership.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, more popularly known as Rajendra Babu, was the President of the Congress Session. A resolution was moved by Dr. Ansari, one of the veteran leaders, eulogising the people for their part in the fight for freedom, expressing sympathy with Indians abroad, condemning violence and giving expression to the Nation’s sorrow at the death of a number of valued colleagues. We objected to such an omnibus resolution being moved, which contained parts which were highly contentious along with others which everyone would support. This point of order was ruled out. In our speeches we voiced strong protest against the Working Committee coming out with such a resolution, which made it impossible for most of us to record our votes with a clear conscience. We demanded that the parts should be voted upon separately. Even this was not conceded. At the very last moment, when the resolution was about to be put to the vote, an interesting piece of information reached us. We made full use of it and pointed out that Dr. Ansari had not paid his membership fee to the Delhi Congress Committee of which he should have been a member. He was, therefore,

not a member of the Congress. No non-member could move a resolution in the Congress. Formally, therefore, there was nothing before the House on which a vote could be taken. This stunned everyone for a moment. There were hurried consultations among the leaders on the dais and it was then announced that the subscription had been deposited with the Secretary. I can only hope that this statement was correct. We lost, of course, but in any case we had proved our nuisance value.

Important changes were made in the Congress Constitution to make the organisation more business-like. Our Party was responsible for one such change. Elections to the All India Congress Committee used to be held by a simple majority vote from among members of the Provincial Committees. The number of our Party members was fairly large in several provinces but nowhere so large as to constitute a majority. Non-Socialists could, therefore, see to it that no member of the Party was sent up to the All-India Congress Committee. This was manifestly unjust, but in our discussions with members of the Working Committee most of them would not concede the point. It was Mahatmaji who accepted our point of view. His scrupulous fairness needs no proof and yet I cannot refrain from quoting the following paragraph from a statement he had issued from Wardha on September 17, 1934.

I have welcomed the formation of the Socialist group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing co-workers. With all this, I have fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorised pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral pressure I may be able to exert, suppress the spread of ideas propounded in their literature. I may not interfere with the spread of those ideas however distasteful some of them may be to me.

He readily saw our difficulty and our suggestion that elections to the All-India Congress Committee should be by single transferable vote was incorporated in the Constitution. It is still there.

I might give another example of a tussle with the leadership. A meeting of the A.I.C.C. (All-India Congress

Committee) was held just before November 11, which used to be observed as Armistice Day. All business was suspended and two minutes' silence was observed exactly at 11 a.m. We proposed that the day should be observed as Anti-Imperialist War Day. Our proposal was negatived, because we were not in a majority. In opposing us, one member of the Working Committee observed that, in speaking as we did, at least four sections of the Indian Penal Code were being violated. He was not pulled up by the President or anyone else. Later, in a public statement, I said that this gentleman was indirectly suggesting to the bureaucracy to take action against Socialists under those four sections. I further said that, in behaving like this, the Working Committee were acting like "informal agents of the Government". This was very strong language, I confess, and not at all justified by circumstances. At the next meeting of the Working Committee, it was suggested that disciplinary action should be taken against me. That this was not done was due, I learnt later, to the personal influence of Rajendra Babu. It should be made clear that we had no intention to foster internal strife within the Congress. All that we wanted was that the tempo should be kept up and there should be no weakening of the spirit of absolute no-compromise on the issue of independence. In a circular issued early in 1935 to Provincial parties, the General Secretary, Comrade Jayaprakash Narayan clearly says: "Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right-wing. Nothing can be worse than adopting such tactics as may divide the Congress into two hostile camps: Socialists and anti-Socialists. We should, on the contrary, try to take the militant nationalists with us and divide the Congress into the latter and compromising moderates. . . . I wish further to emphasize that we should on no account isolate ourselves from the Congress."

I shall give one more instance of our serious differences with the established leadership. A reference has already been made to the Declaration of Independence. Some of us

were not happy about it. We felt that it was not what such a document should be. It was far too argumentative and gave details of the injuries which British rule had inflicted on India in social, economic and other fields. The very first paragraph seemed to us to be badly worded when it stated that the British Government had not only deprived India of freedom but had injured it socially, economically, culturally and spiritually. This definitely relegated freedom to a place of secondary importance, the implication of the sentence being that if the British had not been guilty of inflicting economic and other injuries on India, we would not have minded the loss of freedom so much.

But, evidently, certain quarters looked even upon this document as very revolutionary. The Working Committee changed its wordings before the Independence Day—January 26, 1935. We protested against the change. "A Declaration of Independence", we pointed out, "is a sacred document to be preserved for all time; its wording cannot be modified like that of an ordinary resolution." We failed to convince the Working Committee but were able to canvass considerable public support for our point of view. The changes introduced by the Working Committee and the instructions issued by it for the celebration of the Independence Day may be gathered from the following extract from an article under the caption 'Straws Galore' contributed by me to the *Congress Socialist*, our Party organ, dated 10th February, 1935.

The proposal to substitute the words 'non-violent and truthful' for 'peaceful and legitimate' was sent to the Provincial Congress Committees for eliciting opinion and, to my knowledge, at least three Committees, Sindh, Mahakoshal and U.P., have rejected the change. And yet the Working Committee demands that people should solemnly pledge themselves to non-violence in thought, word and deed! This is a tremendous pledge for any nation, engaged in a struggle for freedom against an unscrupulous system armed with all the meanness of capitalism and resources of science, to take; one that will not be, and has not been, observed, either in the spirit or in the letter, even by some of those who fling it at the nation. . . . But if the contents are so poor, they are hedged round with very elaborate ceremonies. If the whole

thing were not so tragically farcical, one would imagine one was partaking in some masonic ritual. Start processions for the rendezvous but consult the police first. If they do not like the idea give it up. If you are permitted to form processions, please see that your processions are quiet. No singing, no slogans. The spirit of Independence must be carried to the burning ghat with all solemnity. I have spoken also of the rendezvous, the place where the people are to assemble, so that they may perjure themselves. There is to be a meeting only if the Police permits one to be held. If even at the eleventh hour a police officer walks up and asks the people to disperse, they are simply to scuttle away to their holes and take the pledge in private. . . . I do not believe for one single moment that anyone will be morally the better for having heard or read the words embodied in the pledge.

Strong words, perhaps, but they express the heartfelt sentiments of a very large section of nationalist India, not of Socialists alone.

Shri M. N. Roy had returned to India from Russia about this time. For some time, Sardar Patel and some other right-wing leaders extended their patronage to him. It was widely believed that this was done with a view to set him up as a counter-weight to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru who was too much of a leftist to suit them. Roy seemed willing to bite at the bait. At any rate, the proposal that he should join the Congress Socialist Party definitely fell through. He was aware that he was hobnobbing with staunch anti-Socialists but is reported to have said 'I shall ride to victory on the wrong horse'. The horse, however, was too clever for him. It discovered that he was not of much use to it and simply threw him down as a sack of coals. Thereafter, he had to plough his own lonely furrow.

An event of some importance to the Party occurred at the Lucknow Session of the Congress in 1936. I was the G.O.C. of the Volunteer Corps. As I have indicated earlier, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had absolutely no hand in the formation or organisation of the Party and his attitude to the Party had never been very friendly. He had never missed any opportunity to criticise it. But he was never slow to exploit the situation created by the existence of the Party within the Congress. And there was a strong section of opinion

within the Party, led by Messrs. Jaya Prakash Narain and Narendra Deva who lent him their consistent support. We all agreed that as a person ideologically near to us, he should be supported against the right-wing faction but some of us, I among the number, were not prepared to put up with all his whims and submit tamely to his public rebukes, thus strengthening the impression that we were his stooges. Jawaharlalji was at that time alone in the Congress Working Committee and it was no secret that he received scant courtesy at the hands of leaders like Sardar Patel and Kripalani. Aware of the growing strength of the left-wing, the suggestion was put forward that three members of the Congress Socialist Party should join the Working Committee. The men, however, were not to be selected by the Party itself but by the Committee. Their choice fell on Acharya Narendra Deva, Shri Jaya Prakash Narain and Shri Achyut Patwardhan. All three were known for their sweet reasonableness and had not been guilty of giving the High Command any such jolts as I had unfortunately been giving them from the very beginning. My position was an embarrassing one. I was senior to both Jaya Prakash and Patwardhan and any opposition that I might put forward was liable to be misunderstood. But I had to oppose the suggestion, nonetheless. My proposal was that the members of the Party, selected to serve on the Committee, should be our nominees. This was not found acceptable. Jawaharlalji further made a stipulation that, if due to differences with his colleagues, he felt inclined to resign from the Working Committee, our members should also do so. I asked the point-blank question whether he would resign if our members felt inclined to resign, *suo motto* or on instructions from the Party. He was not prepared to accept this obligation. My opposition to the proposal was strengthened by this one-sided agreement imposed on us. It was overruled by the Executive Committee of the Party, but I am not sure that the homogeneity and solidarity which had characterised us from the beginning did not receive a serious blow by what some of us felt to be a weak temporising with right-wing leadership.

It would be idle to deny that some inner contradictions began to make themselves felt within the Party Executive after a bare twelve months of its existence. Due to a liberal interpretation of the rules for membership, a number of Communists infiltrated into the Party and, in this way, secured for themselves a place in the Congress and a platform in the country which would otherwise have not been available to them. They utilized this opportunity to the full and, within the Party itself, tried to create a schism with a view to drive out some people whom they considered, and rightly, to be specially inimical to them. I was their principal butt of attack. These gentlemen, three of whom, Messrs. Ahmad, Ashraf and Sajjad Zahir had found their way into the Executive Committee, lost no opportunity of criticising me and insinuating that I was a right-winger and, therefore, a misfit. It is equally true that, on my side, I looked upon their activities with suspicion. As the 1936 elections to the Legislature, under the Government of India Act, 1935, drew near, these differences grew still more acute.

The position of the Congress Socialist Party in the United Provinces was, in many respects, unique. While in other provinces, members of the Party were, as a rule, new to the Congress, here in our province, conditions were entirely different. Many members of the Party had deep roots in the organisation and held positions of responsibility at all levels. To name but a few, Kamalapati Tripathi, Hari Har Nath Shastri and Chandra Bhanu Gupta were men with established reputation. Moreover, even those Congressmen who were not members of the Party had leanings towards many items of our programme. The Provincial Congress Committee had long ago passed resolutions favouring the liquidation of landlordism. Men like Shri Krishna Dutt Paliwal and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai who were regarded as bitter opponents of our Party were really opposed not so much to Socialism as to some of those who posed as its exponents. We had no doubt that Congress would sweep the polls. The Party had permitted members to stand for election. The next question was, what should Party members

do, if the Congress decided to permit Congressmen to form governments. Here there was a sharp cleavage of opinion. Ours was the only province where Socialists had a chance to become members of Government. Such a possibility existed nowhere else. Many of us felt that we should utilize this opportunity. We might not be in a majority in the Government but we would be in sufficient strength to force decisions. There was no reason why an attempt should not be made to bend our economy the Socialist way, within the narrow limits provided by the Constitution. I was strongly of this opinion. My feeling is that Acharya Narendra Deva also felt likewise but allowed himself to be persuaded not to give his blessings to the idea. This brought matters to a head. After a time I resigned from the Party on this issue. My relations with members, however, continued to be as cordial as before and I always followed the Party whip at meetings of the All-India Congress Committee. The Communists were finally expelled from the Party at Ramgarh in 1941 and I had the melancholy satisfaction of assisting Shri Jaya Prakash Narain in drafting the relevant resolution.

Many of the members of the Party are still occupying important positions in the public life of the country, but the Party as such hardly played any important role in our history after these events. A great opportunity came to it when the Constituent Assembly was convened. Shri Jaya Prakash Narain, the General Secretary, was ill advised to declare that members of the Party would take no part in its deliberations. Though not a member, I was shocked by this decision. I proceeded to Acharya Narendra Deva's house in Faizabad and suggested that he should make a last-minute effort to have this decision revised. He was very ill at the time but he agreed with me and wrote a long letter embodying his opinion. It was carried personally by Shri Mohanlal Gautam. But it was of no avail. Jaya Prakash would not budge an inch from the position he had taken up. If now the complaint is made that the Constitution is not good and is lacking in the fundamentals of Socialism, the

Congress Socialist Party must be prepared to shoulder the blame for not having made the necessary effort.

The Party had lost much of its utility and vitality and the Congress was taking up a more and more positively Socialist attitude. The existence of an organised party within the Congress was no longer tolerated and it had to leave the parent organisation. It then became a plain Socialist Party. How weak its hold had become was evidenced by the fact that in the 1952 election to the Legislature, even such a stalwart as Acharya Narendra Deva lost his seat in his own native town. The Socialist Party then coalesced with the rump of the K.M.P.P. (Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party) which had among its members men like Acharya Kripalani and Shri Triloki Singh, at one time bitter opponents of Socialism. This group had seceded earlier from the Congress. The combined group is now known as the Praja Socialist Party, the P.S.P. as it is briefly called. There was a further split when Dr. Lohia broke off to form the Socialist Party.

The life and work of the Party, short though its period of existence was, was a notable episode in our recent history. It has left a permanent impress upon the Congress and, through the Congress, upon the country. It gave us some of our most valued thinkers like Acharya Narendra Deva and Ashoka Mehta. I wish I could say the same about Jaya Prakash Narayan. His is a story of wasted opportunities. One does not know whether he will stick even on the next day to an opinion he expresses today. The country has not received from him what it had a right to expect from such a brilliant man, a brave fighter whose life is a lesson in austerity and self-sacrifice. I had opportunities of coming in close contact with him when the head office of the Congress Socialist Party was located in Banaras for nearly a couple of years in the beginning and know what an affectionate friend he is. Dr. Lohia is another of those original members of the Party from whom much could have been expected. That, unfortunately, he has completely belied those expectations is too well known to need elaboration.

I should like to make a reference here to a personal matter. During this period, two of my major books, *Anta-rashtriya Vidhan*, the first book on International Law in any Indian language, and *Samaj Vada*, a book on Socialism, came before the public. Mahatmaji was good enough to read *Samaj Vad*. He had also read Jaya Prakash's book *Why Socialism*. He wrote to me that while there seemed to be much that was common between the two books, there was a subtle difference. He could feel it but could not exactly define it. He asked me what it was. I replied that the difference lay in the philosophic approach. Shri Jaya Prakash had based his conclusions on orthodox Marxist philosophy while I started from Vedanta. The practical programmes were very much the same, but they stemmed from two different sources. In his reply, he asked me to write a book on my philosophical ideas. This was the inspiration for *Chidvilas*, my book on philosophy, as I understand it. I have referred to this in my preface to that book.

It would be desirable to refer briefly to the astounding mistake which the Russian Communist Party, which prides itself on its mastery of dialectics, made about the Congress Socialist Party. We managed in those days to have access to a good deal of political literature published in Russia which had been smuggled into India in spite of the best efforts of the Police to stop the traffic. It showed that the Russian Party consistently believed that the Congress Socialists were the agents of right-wing bourgeois leadership, set up to deceive the revolutionary rank and file of the Congress with tall talk of Socialism, anti-imperialism and revolution. Individuals among us were referred to in contemptuous terms, my own description being Vedantic Socialist, the word Vedantic, of course, being a term of abuse, standing for all that is reactionary and superstitious. The only justification for such misrepresentation was that, in the absence of direct communication between the two countries, the Russians had to depend upon reports, sent by clandestine means, by Indian Communists who could not let their masters in Russia believe that there could be any other

genuine Socialists in India. The mistake was discovered later, of course, but only after much time and resources, financial and other, had been wasted in backing these wrong horses.

XII

OUR NATIONAL LANGUAGE

As THIS book is not following a strictly chronological order, it is convenient to bring together matters which, in actual fact, were spread over a number of years.

It seems unnecessary to discuss today what the country's national language is. Hindi has been accorded a place in the Constitution which declares that, on some unspecified date, it will entirely replace English. Many States, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh particularly are marching ahead in their efforts to Hindi-ize their administrations completely. These efforts would have been still more successful if the Centre had been equally active. That it is not so is to a large extent due to the fact that South India, Tamil Nad in particular, has not taken kindly to Hindi. It considers this language to be a symbol of North Indian imperialism which has been engaged in anti-South activities for centuries. The language question has unfortunately got mixed up with the socio-economic questions which have been agitating South India for quite a long time and is not being considered in the proper perspective at all. At the present time, these Tamil friends would rather have English than Hindi. We can only be patient in the face of such a situation which, we hope, will ease of itself in the near future. This apart, the future of Hindi seems to be assured. The responsibility which it throws on lovers of Hindi, specially writers, is heavy but I hope we shall be able to discharge it.

In the beginning, Hindi had to put up a stiff fight against Urdu, later Hindustani came upon the scene. The position of the protagonists of Hindi, and I have been one of them all through, is clear. The name of the country's national language is comparatively unimportant. Historical circumstances had made the name of Urdu unacceptable but we might have had no objection to Hindustani, much as we

would prefer Hindi. What really matters is not the name but the form of the language. Call it what you will, the verbs which form the base of all language are the same. So are the conjunctions, the interjections, the prepositions, the pronouns and most of the nouns. A few retain their pure Sanskrit, others their pure Persian and Arabic, forms. But where words are sought to be governed by the grammar of the language from which they were originally borrowed and some words are given a definitely inferior status because of their derivation from Sanskrit, the language becomes Urdu par excellence and unacceptable. The two following tables give a few examples to illustrate my point:

<i>Word.</i>	<i>Plural according to Indian Grammar.</i>	<i>Plural according to Arabic Grammar.</i>	<i>Comments.</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Sultan	Sultanon	Salatin	} Urdu writers almost invariably use the forms given in column 3.
Mulk	Mulkon	Mamalik	
Zila	Zilon	Azlaa	

<i>Words of Sanskrit origin.</i>	<i>Words of Persian or Arabic origin.</i>	<i>Comments.</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Nadi	Dariya	} Urdu writers either avoid the words in column 1 or use them as inferior to those in column 2.
Nagar	Shahar	
Desha	Mulk	

Urdu writers and speakers also had the irritating habit of mispronouncing words of Sanskrit origin. *Desha*, for instance, would become *desa* with them, *pradesh* would be transformed into *pardesha* and *sthana* into *asthana*, although these gentlemen would never experience any difficulty in pronouncing

English words like 'practice' and 'stable'. The matter was further complicated by the fact that while the number of Hindus knowing not only Urdu but Persian and Arabic was very large, the number of Muslims who knew Hindi or cared to study Sanskrit was almost negligible. The problem became a first-class political issue with a highly emotional background, not untinted by religious feelings.

The Congress tried to cut the knot by avoiding both the old names Hindi and Urdu and seeking to popularise the word Hindustani. In a resolution passed on September 29, 1938, the Congress Working Committee stated :

The proceedings of the Congress, the All-India Congress Committee and the Working Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in Hindustani. The English language or any provincial language may be used, if the speaker is unable to speak in Hindustani or whenever permitted by the President.

Hindustani, according to the definition of the Congress, is the language of the bulk of the people of the north and written either in Devanagari or Urdu script.

This was not enough. In no country in the world can the language of the bazaar serve as the official language of the nation. Whatever name might be given to the language of the bulk of the people of the north, it was bound to be inadequate for conducting the business of the country even before the attainment of Swaraj. It has no words that the Finance Minister can use in a State legislature when presenting his budget. There are no words to convey the ideas which documents of international importance would have to embody. Where are the words which North India uses in ordinary conversation to express the concepts of Physical Science? Words would simply have to be coined and, just as European language base themselves on Greek or Latin, our new vocabulary would have to be derived either from Sanskrit or Persian-Arabic. This was the crux of the problem which the adoption of the name Hindustani could not solve. If one falls back upon Sanskrit, the language becomes Hindi. Arabic and Persian on the other hand lead

to Urdu. The fight had to be fought on many fronts, political and cultural, and the protagonists of Urdu used every kind of weapon to beat us down. We were prevented from hitting back because our position in the Congress precluded us from saying anything that could be interpreted as sowing the seeds of a Hindu-Muslim conflict.

The greatest protagonist of Hindi was Tandonji, Shri Purushottam Das Tandon, to give him his full name. A dauntless fighter, universally respected for his sterling character, he has done more for Hindi than anyone else. He makes enemies by his persistence and unyielding championship of Hindi but opposition is, at the same time, disarmed by the charming simplicity of his nature. No one looking at him today would guess that he was once a first-class cricketer who still retains his interest in the game. His efforts have borne fruit today but few will remember the hurdles which he and his associates have had to cross.

In August 1938, I had occasion, as Education Minister, to visit the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Allahabad and the Nagari Pracharini Sabha in Banaras. In the course of my speeches in reply to addresses presented to me at these two institutions, which have rendered yeoman service to Hindi, I made certain observations about Hindi and Urdu on the lines of what I have stated a little earlier in this chapter. The Urdu Press was at once up in arms against me. I was dubbed communalist and my expulsion from the Congress was demanded by some Muslim gentlemen who were associated with the Congress. In this connection, I wrote a letter to Shri Mahadeva Desai, Mahatmaji's Private Secretary, and in due course received a reply which completely vindicated my position. My letter and the reply were widely distributed. I think it would be worthwhile to reproduce both, because the subject has not yet completely lost its topical interest.

*Lucknow**September 5, 1938*

Dear Mahadeva Bhai,

I am writing this letter with hesitation, as Mahatmaji is observing silence these days and several important questions are engaging his attention. Still the subject on which I am writing has a special importance, hence I would request you kindly to read this letter to him and convey to me his instructions.

I have recently been to Banaras. There I was presented with an address by the Kashi Nagari Pracharini Sabha. There is a good deal of criticism in the Urdu Press of the reply I gave to the address. Several papers which are bitterly opposed to the Congress are today referring to Congress resolutions and they smell communalism in my words. The substance of what I said was as follows :

The character of every language depends upon its verbs which are its bases. Whatever the number of foreign words that may be incorporated in a language, its character and name remain unchanged. There are Persian words in Gujrati, Bengali and Marathi; Greek, Latin and French words in English; and Arabic words in Iranian, still these languages retain their original names. From this point of view, the name of our language should have been Hindi, whatever the number of Persian or Arabic words that may form part of it. Muslim poets in olden days have also called it Hindi Zuban (language). But some time ago, the custom grew up of giving the name Hindi to that form of the language which contains a large number of words of Sanskrit origin and the name Urdu to the form which contains a large number of words of Arabic and Persian origin. Now the name Hindustani is being popularised. No one should object to this. But we should be clear as to its form. Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian words should neither be forcibly introduced into the language nor such words as are in common use forcibly taken out of it. The English language has several words, of different origins, having the same meanings. This should be the case with Hindustani too. This adds to the wealth of the vocabulary of the language, helps literature and gradually creates shades of meaning. The difficulty today is that some people wish to propagate Urdu under the name of Hindustani. The Delhi and Lucknow Radio stations say 'Gandum' instead of 'Genhun', use 'Salis' instead of the simple 'Panch'. When reviewing books, they use the term Hindustani books for Urdu books but call Hindi books by the name Hindi books. This creates a bad impression. I said one thing more. The British have forced their language upon us but the people of the United Provinces cannot force their language upon the country. In determining the form of the language, we have to remember that, as it is our national language, the people of Maharastra, Gujrat, Bengal and Madras have also to use it. For their sake, we have to keep

a sufficiency of words of Sanskrit origin. Both the characters, Urdu and Nagari, will of course, remain, for the present.

I believe I have said nothing in all this which is opposed to any principle or resolution of the Congress or is prejudicial to the political, literary or cultural progress of the country. If we begin to drive out Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian words from our language, the result will be disastrous. And then, Sanskrit has such an intimate connection with the life of a large section of the population of this country that any language created by boycotting it would be artificial.

If you would find the opportunity to consult Mahatmaji and inform me, I should feel grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Sd. Sampurnanand.

P.S.

This is my opinion as an Indian, an ordinary Hindi writer and a Congressman. But at this time I am a Congress Minister. I believe that the opinion I hold is not opposed to the responsibility of this position but Mahatmaji's opinion will help me to understand my position. If I find that this opinion of mine regarding the question of language is not consonant with my official position, I shall endeavour to decide my duty in this connection.

Reply

Segaon, Wardha

8th September, 1938

Bhai Sampurnanand,

I agree with what you have written. The Congress has named the language, it has not imposed any other limitation. Those who are true will not boycott any word on Hindu-Muslim grounds. What can we say about others? Today it has become the fashion to oppose whatever the Congress or Congressmen say. Do you simply want my opinion or anything more, because I have spoken and written enough in this connection.

Yours,

Sd. M. K. Gandhi.

My views have remained constant all through. I do not consider Urdu a separate language but merely a style of Hindi in which words of Arabic and Persian derivation form a high percentage. I do not consider this style suitable for adoption as the official form of the national language.

But I am not an enemy of it. Some very good writers have used it as their medium and it can still have a place in our literature, specially poetry. A language is a living organism and it grows by absorbing new words from a variety of sources. We have taken many words from English, a few even from Portuguese: it would be silly to think of deliberately driving out those hundreds of words from Arabic and Persian which have worked their way into the texture of our language. In fact, some of them have actually driven out words of Sanskrit origin. For instance, the Sanskrit word for change is 'parivartan'. There must have been a time when it or a variant of it was in common use. Now we do not usually hear of it except in high-class literature. In common speech and writings, we use 'badalna', a derivative of the Arabic, 'badal'. 'Vayas' (age) has yielded place to 'umr' and now no one catches cold in the form of 'pratishyaya': it is only 'zukām'. While the language of Science, Art, Law and Administration has to be highly technical and equipped with words not in common use, it would be folly to make the language of everyday use artificial by loading it with Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian words.

The complaint is sometimes heard that the Hindi favoured by men like me is becoming too difficult to understand. Let us be clear what the complaint is. I am as much against making the language artificial as anyone else. Anyone who commits this mistake really isolates himself from those whom he aims to approach. Urdu literature never became popular because it suffered from this defect. But as the national language, Hindi has to serve as the medium for expressing a variety of concepts of a highly complex nature. It must evolve a terminology suitable for this purpose. The new words are bound to appear unfamiliar and un-understandable to the man in the street. Familiarity will come only through use, but technical language is always beyond the depth of the average citizen.

Some of our great leaders who are not at home in Hindi often give expression to opinions which are very disconcerting. While any attempt at forcing non-Hindi-speaking

sections of the population to adopt Hindi must be completely tabooed, it would be against the national interest to cease to propagate the language. As a lover of Hindi and a humble author, it gladdens my heart to see the all-round growth of Hindi literature, in spite of some very serious drawbacks. One of the most serious of such drawbacks is the silent apathy of the gentlemen who teach in our colleges and universities. Having received their own education in English, they find it difficult to switch over to Hindi. One can sympathize with them in their difficulty. But they must realize that the plunge will have to be taken some day. What many of them seem trying to do is to delay the advent of that day as much as possible. Want of demand from the universities naturally makes publishers shy to invest their money in publishing high-grade books of a technical nature. And then people turn round and say that the absence of such books is holding up the adoption of Hindi by the universities. This vicious circle has to be broken somewhere.

There is one branch of Hindi literature over which it is difficult to enthuse. I refer to journalism. The standard is, with a very few exceptions, very low as compared to that maintained by journals in other Indian languages. The jokes are stale and border on the indecent and there is a great tendency to attach importance to personalities rather than principles. Hardly any attempt is made to provide a variety of reading matter. Whatever the reasons — and some of them are fairly well known — our newspapers and magazines must rise to the level expected of journals published in a language which is acclaimed as being the national language of India. Editors, publishers, working journalists and the Government must all combine to remove the stigma of inferiority from which this branch of our literature suffers.

XIII

THE FIRST CONGRESS GOVERNMENT

THE YEAR 1936 was the year of elections. Every one was busy either working for himself or canvassing votes for others. In our province, the Zemindars put up a united front against the Congress. They knew that there was acute discontent against them. They had alienated all sympathy by 'their wanton cruelty. Tenants were ejected on the slightest pretext, often on no pretext at all. Often no receipts were given for money received; therefore, it was possible to force payment for the same amount, several times over. Beating, physical torture in other ways, humiliation, all this was the regular order of the day. Curious exactions were levied by some Zemindars blessed with a lively imagination: *motarāwan*, whenever a new car was purchased and *pet-pirāwan*, literally pain in the belly, levied whenever there was a child-birth in the tenants' house, were some of the impositions under which tenants suffered. No wonder, the Zemindars were afraid that their tenants would not vote for them. Threats of all kinds were held out. There was also the confidence that the authorities would go all out to oppose the Congress. After all, the Zemindars had been able to organise their reign of terror, because the authorities relied on them to help keep the tenants in check, turning a blind eye to whatever the Zemindar did. One good turn deserves another.

The Congress also had made the fullest preparations. The only other parties in the field were the Muslim League and the Hindu Maha Sabha. Nobody took the latter very seriously but the League had a good following. It has been asserted that there was some kind of understanding between the Congress and the League. In any case, the two did not oppose each other's candidates. As it was, the Congress came in with a thumping majority. The Zemindars were simply routed. The question of office acceptance then came up.

It was finally decided that Congressmen should enter the government. The League expected, on the basis of the electoral alliance, that they would also be given places in the Ministry. This was not done. This act of duplicity, as leaders of the League called it, made them very bitter and was the cause of that Congress-League rift that finally resulted in the partition of the country and the coming into existence of Pakistan. Chaudhary Khaliquzzaman, the leader of the League party in the Assembly, was an old Congressman of Lucknow. He now became one of the bitterest critics of the Congress. In the end, he migrated to Pakistan, where he still lives.

For a short time before the Congress formed a Ministry, there was an interim government of the nominees of the Government. It did nothing but mark time and retired into oblivion, unwept and unhonoured.

The first Congress ministry was sometimes called by its detractors the all-Brahman Ministry. Besides the two Muslim members, Shri Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim, there were four Hindus, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier, Dr. Kailas Nath Katju, Smt. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Pt. Pyare Lal Sharma, all Brahmans. This was an accident, of course, but it could not but attract notice. One of the first acts of the Congress Party after the coming into office was to secure the election of one of its own members to the Speaker's Chair. This was Shri Purushottam Das Tandon. From the very first day, the new Speaker earned the respect of all sections of the House by his absolute fairness and his mastery of Parliamentary procedure. The existing rule about speeches seemed to lay down that normally the business of the House would be conducted in English, Hindi being allowed only in those cases where a member was unable to express himself in English. Tandonji interpreted it to mean just the reverse. At one stroke, Hindi became the language of the Assembly.

Our Legislature was bicameral, with a Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council. The President of the Council was Dr. Sita Ram. The Constitution had made the Assembly much the more important House of the two.

I had contested the Banaras City seat and won with a comfortable majority over my Hindu Sabha rival. Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya professed to be impressed by my leanings towards ancient Hindu culture; he opposed my candidature, nevertheless. After the elections, I had a severe attack of jaundice which kept me confined to bed for several months. Allopathy failed to tackle the disease. I was eventually cured under the treatment of Pt. Satyanarain Shastri, the well known Vaidya of Banaras. His services to Ayurveda have quite rightly been recognized by the Rashtrapati conferring upon him the distinction of Padma Bhushana. During my illness, I received an interesting letter from Mahatmaji in which he said "How is it that the majority of you Socialists keep such bad health? Narendra Deva is a chronic sufferer from asthma, Mehr Ali is down with heart trouble, Jaya Prakasha is ill and now you, who seemed to be the healthiest of the lot, are also confined to bed. Evidently none of you can look after himself. Come to Wardha for some time and stay with me. I promise to send you back fully cured." The language is the language of humour but behind the humour there is rich evidence of the sympathy and affection he felt for some of us. It was this quality of his that kept attached to his person even those who felt that they had deep and fundamental differences of opinion with him.

The Congress Ministry was well received and one of its first acts was to confer statutory rights on a large number of tenants henceforth called statutory tenants, which made their ejection difficult. This automatically took away much of the power of the Zemindars to impose illegal levies or subject kisans to humiliation and physical ill-treatment. Congress leadership, however, has an irritating habit of thinking aloud and washing its dirty linen in public. At the U.P. Political Conference, held at Harduaganj, District Aligarh, early in 1938, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru bitterly criticised the Ministry for the easy life it was leading and the adulations it was receiving from the public. The speech naturally received wide publicity and warmed the hearts

of opponents of the Congress. I was not a minister then and felt the criticism to be thoroughly unjustified. I even suggested to the Premier, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, Pantji as he is popularly known, to protest against this. He himself had felt hurt but decided to say nothing.

Pt. Pyarelal Sharma resigned soon after. Who his successor should be became quite a live problem which was kept alive for quite some time, due to the inability of the Premier to make up his mind. Mine was one of the names mentioned in this connection. It is interesting to remember that a small deputation met the Premier, asking him not to select me, because, being a Socialist, I would naturally be opposed to the scheme of Basic Education sponsored by Mahatmaji. Two of the deputationists were Srimati Prakashwati Sud of Meerut and the late Manzar Ali Sokhta of Allahabad. The rest of the names I do not remember. However, Pantji's choice finally fell upon me and I took the oath of office as Minister of Education on March 2, 1938.

The work done by the Congress Government during its twenty-eight months' tenure of office has been very ably described by the late Shri Gopinath Srivastava in his book *When Congress Ruled*. He was an able journalist and the first sponsor of Penal Reform in the Province. His early death was a great loss to public life. As the book shows, there was no aspect of the life of the community which did not receive a sympathetic touch from the Government. Our resources in those days were small, the total budget not exceeding 13 crores, but the rupee had a greater purchasing value and we spent every pie we could find on the so-called nation-building departments. Education, Harijan Welfare, Public Health, Irrigation, all received their share. Labour Welfare was recognised as a charge on the State for the first time. The first step towards exercising some control on places of public worship was also taken during this regime. The Badrinath Temple, situated among the Himalayas, attracts pilgrims from all over India. It was formerly in the territory of what used to be the Tehri State and the Maharaja still exercised a shadowy control over it. Matters were

complicated by the fact that under a convention which started in the time of Shri Shankaracharya 1200 years ago, the Rawal or Head Priest, has to be a Nambudiri Brahman from distant Kerala. There were reports of great abuse of Temple funds and discomforts suffered by pilgrims due to the apathy of the Temple authorities. Several times the question of imposing some kind of control had been taken up but each time it was abandoned for one reason or another. This time I sponsored a legislative measure, The Badrinath Temple Bill, for placing the management of the Temple in the hands of a Committee with a Chairman nominated by the Government. The Bill passed into law and this vexed question which had been hanging fire for more than half-a-century was at last settled. The jurisdiction of the Act was, later, extended to the Kedar Nath Temple which is situated at a still higher altitude.

I do not intend to give details about our other work but there is one subject to which reference will have to be made at some length. As is well known, Mahatmaji had laid down the principles of Basic Education whose details had later been worked out by a Committee consisting of Dr. Zakir Hussain of the Jamia Millia, now Governor of Bihar, and Shri Aryanayakam of Wardha. The Committee's report embodies the Wardha Scheme of Basic Education. Soon after assuming office, I set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Acharya Narendra Deva to advise Government on Primary and Secondary Education. The Committee's report is a valuable testimony to the work put in by its members. The part of it dealing with Secondary Education could not be implemented in the short time at our disposal but the Scheme of Primary Education was put through in full. The Committee, it may be mentioned, had had the benefit of the experience and advice of Dr. Zakir Hussain, one of the two signatories of the Wardha Report, as he had agreed to serve as one of its members.

While fully accepting the principles underlying Basic Education, as laid down by Mahatmaji, the recommendations

of the Committee differed in three particulars from the Wardha Scheme :

- (i) Art was made a compulsory part of the syllabus. It was felt that Art is necessary not only for training the eyes and the fingers and bringing about necessary coordination between the mind and the sense-organs but as a medium of self-expression whose denial leads to various major and minor psychoses in later life.
- (ii) The Wardha Scheme had suggested that at least a part of the cost of education should be met from the proceeds of the sale of articles produced by children. This idea was completely rejected. The school cannot be treated as a slave-labour camp. Society must bear the cost of the child's education.
- (iii) The history syllabus was revised. It was felt that a generation brought up on Wardha history would know nothing about the traditions of the country and the course of its growth.

Basic Education requires specially trained teachers and these cannot be easily had. We, therefore, opened a Training College at Allahabad for training graduates in Basic Technique and then opened centres at the headquarters of each division where these gentlemen could give a refresher training to teachers drawn from existing primary schools. We knew that the training these men had received was not adequate but to wait for perfection was to wait for doomsday. We were criticised from many quarters on this account, as well as for departing from the orthodox Wardha syllabus. I pushed on with our work, apprehensive all the while lest Mahatmaji might feel that what we were working for was not Basic Education at all. A word of disapproval from him would have blasted all our schemes.

We had decided to convert 1300 primary schools into basic schools simultaneously. In other provinces, they had decided to introduce basic schools on an experimental basis in small pockets. My fear was that if the Congress Government came to resign, as it was bound to do sooner or later, their successors would be able to wipe out these pockets in a day but it would not be so easy for them to undo what was going on all over the Province in such a large number of institutions. My intuition proved right. Our basic schools

survived the exit of the Congress from the administrative field.

At 10 o'clock on August 9, 1939, the scheme of changing 1,300 primary schools into Basic Schools was formally implemented at a ceremony at Allahabad presided over by the Premier, Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant. Mahatmaji had been good enough to send his blessings for the occasion. Our scheme was fairly launched and its future was assured.

At this point, I must pay my tribute of praise to the officers of the Education Department who took up this scheme most loyally and enthusiastically. Dr. Ibadur Rahman Khan whom I had specially selected for this purpose deserves special mention. But for his devotion and indefatigable hard work, the whole scheme might have foundered on the rock of routine and red tape.

I might mention an interesting incident which took place some time after the resignation of the Ministry. A meeting of the Congress Working Committee took place in Allahabad and Mahatmaji and some other leaders were good enough to visit the Basic Training College. Mr. Powell-Price, the Director of Education, and Dr. Khan were there to show them round and, though no longer a member of Government, I had also been asked to be present. To our great relief, Mahatmaji expressed his satisfaction at what he saw. Shri Rajagopalachari went a step further. He asked Dr. Khan if he could come to Madras for some time to reorganise Basic Education in that province. With great tact, Dr. Khan replied that he would be happy to render such service, if I ordered him to do so. Shri Rajagopalachari then turned to me with the request that I might permit Dr. Khan to go there for some time. I replied that it would give me the greatest pleasure to comply with his wish. In his anxiety to utilize the services of Dr. Khan, Shri Rajagopalachari forgot that neither he was in a position to ask for Dr. Khan nor I in a position to allow him to go, both of us having resigned. I did not care to remind him of this and spoil the atmosphere.

Another important reform that we began was a movement for the removal of adult illiteracy. It took the form of a

no-thumb-impression campaign. Several methods were employed to induce illiterate adults to join classes in their leisure hours. As a complementary measure, over 700 libraries and 3,600 Reading Rooms were established in rural areas. The purchase of books for the libraries gave a great fillip to the publishing trade in Hindi and Urdu.

A passing reference might also be made to a University Education Reforms Committee of which I was the Chairman. The Committee was split up, for the sake of convenience, into two sub-committees, one dealing with the Allahabad and Lucknow Universities and the other with the Agra University, the sectional Chairmen being Acharya Narendra Deva, and Acharya Jugal Kishore respectively. The final report of the Committee was submitted after we had resigned. A few months later, I happened to meet Dr. Panna Lal, the Advisor to the Governor in charge of Education. I complained to him that the Report had been thrown into the waste-paper basket. He assured me that this was not the case; it had only been put in cold storage!

Then came the Second World War. The Congress refused to co-operate with the Government as a vassal of Great Britain. It was prepared to come in only as a free ally. This, of course, was not acceptable to our rulers and the Congress decided to withdraw its co-operation. The ministries resigned in November 1939.

Thus ended the first phase of Congress government in the country. We had not brought down Heaven on earth but we had the satisfaction of doing the best that was possible in the short period at our disposal, within our statutory limitations and without the support of a national government at the Centre.

I might refer to an interesting constitutional question which came up before us during this period. According to the Lucknow University Act, the Governor had to make certain nominations to the Executive Committee of the University. Four seats had fallen vacant. As Education Minister, I recommended that the gentlemen whose terms had expired should not be re-nominated and suggested

what I considered to be suitable substitutes. The Governor, Sir Harry Haig, accepted that part of my advice in which I had opposed re-nomination. For the rest, he nominated four men of his own choice. The plea was that in this Act, the word Governor meant 'the Governor acting in his discretion' and therefore, not bound to accept his Minister's advice. This was very irritating. I told the Premier that the Governor could use his discretion in such matters as he chose but finding money for the University was within my jurisdiction. I would not provide anything for this purpose in the next budget. The Governor may finance it as he can. How far I could have implemented the threat is a different matter but it worked. A compromise procedure was adopted between the Governor and myself which would eliminate such frictions for the future.

It must be admitted that Sir Harry Haig proved a great sportsman. He was probably the only Governor who, on retirement, paid a tribute to his Congress Ministers.

XIV

FRAYED NERVES

THE NATION in general showed a great appreciation of the stand taken by the Congress. The aftermath of the First World War had not been forgotten. The war had been declared without consulting India and it would be concluded if and when it pleased Britain to do so. No doubt a few Indians would be nominated to sit on Committees and Commissions and even the Peace Conference would have one or two Indians to sign the Peace Treaty. But the country was in no mood to be satisfied with such make-believes. It would have been highly improper for ministers to help in running a war in which Indian soldiers would be pure mercenaries. And yet the people had seen the ministries at work and there was general regret at their resignation.

There was one exception, however. The Muslim League expressed great satisfaction at what had happened and celebrated the end of Congress rule by observing with great éclat what it called the Deliverance Day. This neither added to its prestige nor enhanced its reputation for political wisdom. Even politically advanced Muslim opinion was against this. That a body of Indians, no matter what their religion or political faith, should prefer foreign rule to government by another body of Indians was a matter of shame. That the ruling body had also included Muslims was a serious reflection on the wisdom of the League.

This period was one filled with numerous worries for me. My youngest son died in October 1939, and his death was followed about a fortnight later by the death of my wife. In the course of the next twelve months or so, I lost another son and my elder daughter, Minakshi. It was by her sick-bed, soon to be converted into her death-bed, that I wrote my book *Vyakti Aur Raj*, which appeared some time later in an English version as *The Individual and the State*, now

running its second edition. And it was in this year that my Master breathed his last.

We had resigned but this was only a negative step. The country expected something more positive and dynamic. At a meeting of the Congress Working Committee held in Allahabad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad assured us that this time it was going to be a fight to the finish and, apart from non-violence, no restrictions such as the wearing of Khadi would be imposed. This was heartening and we all hoped that some plan of campaign would soon be announced. But the Working Committee seemed to be in no hurry about it. It would meet from time to time and issue solemn exhortations to the people to be brave and to be prepared for all sacrifices and then quietly disperse. The same farcical ceremony was followed in the Provinces. Some of us got tired of this. I once insisted that the Executive Council of our Provincial Congress Committee should no longer pass such resolutions. The people were ready. If we at the top were not, it was unfair to act as if it was the public which was wanting in courage and the spirit of self-sacrifice. My point of view was appreciated by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and the solemn exhortation was dropped, to be replaced by an expression of confidence that the people would show the requisite virtues when called upon to do so.

Such delay was proving very irritating. Every one had confidence in Mahatmaji's leadership and his uncanny intuition which enabled him to choose just the right time to start a movement. But the impatience of the rank and file was understandable and, in the circumstances, pardonable. The delay was also causing real hardship in many cases. I knew of a Congress worker in Banaras who owned a petty grain shop. In anticipation of what might be called an early outbreak of hostilities, he sold his business and sent his wife who was in an advanced state of pregnancy to her father's house. But the call did not come and the family found themselves in great distress. There were many cases of a more or less similar nature. It was difficult to reconcile oneself to this unnecessary hardship to which workers were being

exposed, because of the apparent inability of the leaders to make up their minds.

Not that there was complete political inactivity. There was some correspondence between the Viceroy and Mahatmaji on the one hand and the Viceroy and Mr. Jinnah on the other. The Liberal leaders had also come out with a strong indictment of British rule and indicated that delay in granting India the status of a self-governing country was alienating the Indian people more and more from the Government. The advice of such well-meaning Indians fell on deaf ears quite as much as the stronger denunciation from Congressmen and others more avowedly Leftist.

The much-awaited plan of action was made public in a statement issued by Mahatmaji on October 15, 1940. For a moment, everyone was stunned. It seemed to be the anti-climax of all that had been expected and dashed to the ground the hopes of thousands who had been waiting to hear the call for action. Mahatmaji had previously discussed it with members of the Working Committee and himself admitted that, even after three days' discussion, he had failed to convince at least two of its members.

The Plan was what was called Individual Civil Disobedience. In the first place, only one man in the whole of India was chosen to offer this form of Satyagraha, which was to consist in his preaching against war as such or against participation by India in the present War, according to his conscience. He was to carry on with his sermon, whether there was any audience or not, irrespective of any action that Government might take to prevent people from listening to him. If, however, he was arrested, another man would take his place. But the Satyagrahi would always be a man of Mahatmaji's choice. There was absolute insistence on quality and quality alone. The Satyagrahi-elect was to be a man who believed fully in the constructive programme of Khadi and Village Industries, had driven untouchability completely from his heart and was fully wedded to truth and non-violence. Quite obviously, the average Congressman

was not such a paragon of virtue and knew that he would never come up to this standard.

The first Satyagrahi selected by Mahatmaji was Shri Vinoba Bhave. He is known all over the country today as the sponsor of the Bhoodan movement but he was little known outside Gandhiji's immediate circle in 1940. In the statement referred to above, Gandhiji had given a long and detailed description of Vinobaji's qualifications. No one disputes the correctness of the description but very few found it possible to agree to the plan that he alone should start Satyagraha in the name of the nation. When Mahatmaji first mentioned the name at the meeting of the Working Committee, there was a general outburst of surprise and disapproval. I was informed on the highest authority that when Mahatmaji mentioned, among his other virtues, that he had never known woman in his life, one senior member of the Committee exclaimed "I do not care whether he has known one woman or ten women, what has this got to do with Satyagraha?"

Elaborating the Plan, Mahatmaji said "Non-violent Congress cannot wish ill to Britain. Nor can it help her through arms, since she seeks to gain her own freedom, not through arms, but through unadulterated non-violence. . . . The Congress has no desire, therefore, to surround ammunition factories or barracks and prevent people from doing what they like. We want to tell the people of India that if they will win Swaraj through non-violent means, they may not co-operate militarily with Britain in the prosecution of the War."

Having been warned by his experience with members of the Working Committee that it would be difficult to convince people at large of the soundness of the Plan, he says "Wait patiently and see what happens. Carry out instructions to the best of your ability. Do nothing to thwart the Plan. . . . It matters little whether one person offers Civil Disobedience or many. The rest have to render such support as they may be called upon to do." Frankly speaking, such reasoning left most of us cold. Wars for national freedom,

we felt, cannot be lost or won by the victory or defeat of a single champion from one side or the other. The whole nation has to fight and not merely to look on as sympathetic spectators.

The Government, however, had no intention of playing the game according to the Mahatma's rules. It was not prepared to take the risks involved in permitting individuals, however godlike in nature, to preach against war, this war in particular. The first Satyagrahi was arrested, so were others after him. There was no Satyagraha on a nation-wide scale but the number of those offering themselves steadily increased for a time. And as the number grew, the stress on quality could not be maintained. It was not possible for Mahatmaji to centralise selection and control in his own hands. In the United Provinces, we drew up a list of Satyagrahis, giving the first place to the erstwhile Premier, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. I can honestly confess that not one of us came to the standard set by Mahatmaji.

Such a movement has much to recommend it. It was a splendid means of registering symbolic protest. And it can be conceded that one good man is worth a whole army of men of indifferent character. But a nation cannot let its wars be fought for it by angels. Common men must contribute their blood and tears. The vicarious experience of the emotions felt by heroes bearing the Cross is no substitute for such emotions felt by oneself and the sympathetic appraisal of the heroism of another person cannot take the place of self-denial practised in one's own person. The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement could not, from its very nature, go far enough. After a time, psychological reaction set in and the movement became dull and uninspiring. The Government ceased to be worried by it and it died a kind of slow, natural death. Hardly anyone offered Satyagraha a second time, after release from prison.

I was myself sentenced to one year and was transferred to Fatchgarh Central Prison. There I was in the company of the Speaker, Shri Purushottam Das Tandon, Dr. Katju and Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim. The Ministry had resigned

but the Assembly had not been formally dissolved. Tandonji, therefore, insisted that he was still the Speaker. Every week, his Personal Assistant used to come to the prison with some papers for him to sign. It was only after some time that the Government realised the anomaly implicit in this arrangement and put an end to it by executive order.

Life in prison was this time comparatively more peaceful. I was able to finish my book *Aryon Ka Adi Desh* on the original home of the Aryans. According to my studies, they came neither from the Arctic region nor from Central Asia but were the inhabitants of *Sapta Sindhava*, the land drained by the seven rivers Indus, Sutlaj, Vyas, Jhelum, Ravi, Chenab and Saraswati, roughly modern Punjab. Many of us did a little spinning and some of us, I among the number, were interested in cooking. There were many young men in the 'B' Class, some of whom I was successful in getting interested in star-gazing. I can only hope that some of them still retain that interest.

I should not like to close this chapter without referring to a rather interesting episode. The Government had managed to intercept a letter sought to be smuggled out of the Deoli Detention Camp by Shri Jaya Prakash Narain in which violence had been advocated. The letter was made public through a communique. Suggestions were made in certain quarters that restrictions imposed on Satyagrahi prisoners should be made more stringent. Mahatmaji, who had not offered Civil Disobedience, issued a statement some parts of which merit reproduction, because they show that while he was not prepared to depart from strict non-violence and truth in his own conduct and would have liked everyone else to conform to these principles, he was a realist and could appreciate the point of view of others. The Government laid special emphasis on certain sentences in the smuggled letter. In this connection Mahatmaji says:

To practice deception, to resort to secret methods and even to plot murder are all honourable and turn the perpetrators into national heroes. Are not Clive and Warren Hastings British heroes? If Jai Prakash Narain was in the British diplomatic service and by secret diplomacy

achieved something of importance, he would be covered with distinction. . . . The method advocated by him is against the policy of Truth and Non-violence adopted by the Congress and he deserves the severest condemnation. But it ill becomes the Government to condemn or discredit him. Frankly, all nationalist forces, no matter by what name they are described, are at war with the Government. And according to accepted canons of war, the method adopted by Jai Prakash Narain is perfectly legitimate. . . . The sensation with which the event has been disclosed to the Indian world is ill-conceived. The annotations in the Communique are probably wholly unwarranted. When it is borne in mind that Jai Prakash Narain is an untried detenu, the annotations look very like hitting below the belt. . . . The suggestion made in some newspapers that the restrictions on prisoners should be tightened is wholly irrelevant to Jai Prakash Narain's attempt. That it was frustrated is enough proof of the efficiency of the C.I.D. Even if it is lax, laxity can be no warrant for giving them bad or insufficient food or keeping them in places far away from their homes, making it difficult or expensive for relatives to visit detenus. . . . Prisoners of war are treated like princes compared to political prisoners whose status would be any day superior to that of prisoners of war. . . . One word to Congressmen. While Jai Prakash Narain remains the patriot we have known him, they must realize that his method is harmful in the extreme, while a non-violent struggle is going on. . . . Indeed, I would appeal to Jai Prakash Narain to reconsider his philosophy and, if his reason can approve, to repudiate the method as a lapse of sound reason and of the loyalty he owes to the Congress.

It would be difficult to find a stronger defence of an erring follower. It is this trait which endeared Gandhiji even to those whose opinions differed from his.

XV

THE EVE OF THE LAST FIGHT

WE CAME back from prison, very much dissatisfied with ourselves and things in general. If any spiritual forces had been released by our symbolic protest, we were not aware of the fact. Our feelings were somewhat like those of an army which had been defeated without putting up the fight of which it considered itself capable. The war efforts of the Government were going on unchecked and the hope which Gandhiji had expressed in the following words when launching the Civil Disobedience movement did not seem destined to be realized: "And who knows that I shall not be an instrument for bringing about peace not only between Britain and India but also between the warring nations of the earth. This last wish will not be taken for vanity by those who believe that my faith is not a sham but a reality greater than the fact that I am penning these lines."

Early in January 1942, the Working Committee applied another irritant. I have referred in a previous chapter to the changes which it had made in 1935 in the original Independence Pledge and the protest the changes had evoked. This time further changes were made and the Pledge was, if anything, made still more innocuous. The first paragraph of the original pledge asserting "the inalienable right of the Indian people" to have freedom was no doubt retained but much else was added. Not only was there a panegyric of the constructive programme but a vow that "we shall, therefore, spin regularly and use for our personal requirements nothing but Khadi and, so far as possible, products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise." This, many of us felt, was preposterous. To ask the soldiers of a nation engaged in what should be a life and death struggle for freedom not only to wear a particular type of uniform but to produce the cloth of which the uniform is made hardly looked like sound generalship. Some

of us, Jaya Prakasha and myself in particular, raised our voices strongly in protest. We tried to expose the inopportuneness of the changes and their probable effect of demoralising the nation and turning its mind into ineffectual pacifist channels. I especially emphasised the idea that an Independence Pledge is everywhere a document to which special sanctity is attached. There should be one specific document to which future generations could look back with pride and reverence as 'The Independence Pledge'. A resolution changed on a hundred occasions could never command that respect and prestige.

Mahatmaji took note of our protests and issued a long statement in reply. In one significant sentence, he observed that he would feel very much worried "if those who would have to lead the movement, as Shri Jaya Prakash Narain and Sampurnanandji would certainly have to, had no faith in Khadi." This personal reference was very touching and, at the same time, very embarrassing. I at once wrote a personal letter to him saying that it would be very unbecoming on the part of a humble worker like me to engage in a press controversy with him but since he had expressed his confidence in me by indicating that I would be one of those men who would have to lead the movement, I felt it my duty to make clear my position as regards Khadi. I did not believe that Khadi would bring us freedom. When the British came to India, there was no other cloth available except Khadi and yet we were enslaved. As a Socialist, I believed in large-scale industry but unemployment and poverty in our country could not be removed by the mill industry alone. This would have to be supplemented by small-scale industries, among which hand-spinning and hand-weaving have the greatest potentiality for obvious reasons. This would be true for a long time even after the attainment of Swaraj. Also, Congressmen had been wearing Khadi ever since 1921. It had become their distinctive uniform and must not be discarded. If, I added, this confession of faith satisfied Gandhiji, well and good. Otherwise, I would not pollute the movement by insincerely concealing

my real opinions. I would resign. But this would not mean my withdrawal from the fight. I would seek other ways of playing my part according to my lights. Mahatmaji's reply was brief and to the point: *Apne jo likha hai, wah mere liye paryapta hai*—what you have written is quite enough for me. My conscience was now clear. My heresy, such as it was, had Mahatmaji's blessings.

There was talk of a new world order which was to be ushered in at the end of this 'war to end all wars'. Plans for a new organisation to replace the moribund League of Nations were already being settled. But countries like India were not to benefit from such changes as were being contemplated. On his assumption of office as Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill had breathed a new life and a new vigour into England's war efforts, but he had made it clear that he had not assumed office with a view to liquidate the Empire. In an article contributed to the *National Herald*, November 10, 1940, under the caption 'The New World Order', I had stated:

Everyone says there is going to be a new world, a new world order, as soon as we have disposed of the present war. . . . Now what is this new world order to which the tragedy and travail of the war is to lead up? No one cares to define it. We are asked to live and work and sacrifice and die in faith; only some must pledge their faith to Hitler and Mussolini, others to Churchill and his apostles. . . . Japan is following the old and hallowed apostolic tradition of saving the soul of the damned at the point of the sword. Italy carried out a successful enterprise of the same kind in Abyssinia. . . . And now Germany has taken up the torch. All this enables us to form a pretty good guess of the kind of new world totalitarianism wishes to create. And what may we expect from the victory of England and her allies? One has only to remember that while the British Government have been very prompt in giving official recognition to the derelict Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian and Czechoslovak governments, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs refused, when pressed in Parliament sometime back, to make a similar declaration about Haile Salassie's government. . . . England has consistently refused to admit India's right to independence. . . . The country is being asked to make sacrifices which have no place, and are not to have a place, in her own corporate life. And at the end of the war, she is promised something that will not even be similar to what the dominions enjoy today. Mr. Amery (the Secretary of State) was very careful to draw a distinction between the status and functions of a

dominion. India will have the status but not the functions of a dominion The basic fact is that, whichever side wins, the world will be very much what it is now. . . . Nations will be enslaved and fattened for exploitation and chains that gall today will become more strongly rivetted.

This then is the kind of New Order which the combatants on either side are building up. They can build no other. But, surely, this is not the world which the suffering peoples of the world are hungering for. If there is to be imperialism and exploitation, if there are to be recurring wars to effect a balance of power and an adjustment of economic resources which suffer from inherent inequilibrium, where is the sense in talking of a new world and a new world order? If humanity is really tired of the old world and wants a new dispensation, it must rise now and take the reins in its own hands. Its rulers are out to betray it, as they have betrayed it before.

I paid a couple of months' visit to Kashmir in the summer, as the guest of the Kashmir Government. They had set up a Committee to recommend to the Government the form of the language in which textbooks, specially for the primary classes, should be prepared and had made me one of its members. It was interesting work. The Committee had to decide between the claims of pure Urdu, on the one hand, and Kashmiri, the language of the common people, on the other. On the whole, I think, we were able to steer clear of both extremes and evolved something that could be generally acceptable. Even that section of the population which pressed for Hindi could not have much ground for complaint. After meeting for about a couple of months, the Committee adjourned its sittings to meet again in September. When it did, I was in prison.

The war was approaching its most critical period. The impatience of the Indian people was also growing apace. Rumbles of the coming storm had begun to make themselves heard. On the one hand, the Government was in no mood to tolerate any interference with its war efforts; on the other, the people felt that it was no longer possible to offer co-operation to a government which treated Indian sentiment with such callous indifference. The psychological lassitude which had set in in the beginning of the year had worn off and it was generally expected that issues would be forced, in some way or the other, by the middle of the year.

XVI

1942

THE STORM finally broke in August. A meeting of the All India Congress Committee was scheduled to be held in Bombay on August 7. All eyes were turned on Bombay but, while the terms of the resolution likely to be passed were not known, everyone felt sure that it would be based on the principle of no compromise with Imperialism. The general body of Congressmen as well as the Government felt certain that a struggle was imminent. What form it would take could not be anticipated because Gandhiji's ways were inscrutable but it was certain that it would be bitter. No quarter would be shown or asked for. So long as Gandhiji was in charge, non-violence would be insisted upon. No relaxation could be expected on that point but, for the rest, people would be left to their own devices. The Government was also alert. It was watching Bombay with interest but it had made the fullest preparations to nip the trouble in the bud. Every prominent Congressman was to be arrested, as soon as the Working Committee threw an ultimatum in the form of a fighting resolution. It was hoped that in this way the organisation would be reduced to a leaderless rabble, robbed of all power of mischief and bound to be suppressed in a very short time without much effort.

Not that the British had not made an effort to stave off the trouble. They did not want an agitation on their hands with the Japanese menace drawing nearer every day. Whatever the result of the agitation — and they were never in doubt about their ability to put such a revolt down — it was bound to have a bad psychological effect and bound to affect the war effort to some extent. On March 12, 1942 Mr. Churchill announced that Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, would be coming to India to confer with Indian representatives about constitutional matters. The choice was excellent. Sir Stafford Cripps was reputed to be a

friend of India and his personal relations with some of the Indian leaders, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, were known to be very intimate. If the mission failed, this was wholly due to the inadequacy of the message which he was commissioned to convey. The terms which he offered were mainly :

- (i) The setting up, after the cessation of hostilities, of a Constituent Assembly whose recommendations would be accepted and implemented by the British Government and
- (ii) The signing of a negotiated treaty between the British Government and the constitution-making body.

In the interim period, the Government of India must bear full responsibility for administration with the co-operation of Indian leaders. The subject of Defence was one in which the Government did not intend to share responsibility. But even as regards military affairs, an Indian Minister of Defence could be appointed who would be in charge of a subject like Canteens!

Quite obviously, the day was gone when India could be expected to accept such terms. The country wanted independence here and now. As Mahatmaji wrote in his paper, the *Harijan*, in reply to a question whether he envisaged free India, "I do. It will be only then that you will see real co-operation." It was also made clear by him and others that Indian independence did not necessarily imply the immediate withdrawal of British and Allied troops from the country. Such forces could not remain in the country as of right but the Government of Free India might, if it so chose, consent to their stay. It was not found possible to forge a common platform between the British offer and Indian demands and the Working Committee passed a resolution rejecting the Cripps proposals. The following sentences from the resolution show the reasons for the rejection :

The Committee would repeat that an essential and fundamental prerequisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people in the present is their realization as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. It is manifest that

the present Government of India as well as its provincial agencies are lacking in competence and are incapable of shouldering the burden of popular representatives, as that can only be done by present freedom and full responsibility being cast upon them. The Committee are unable to accept these proposals.

The rejection of the proposals by the Working Committee was hailed with a sigh of relief by the country, in general. The offer made by Britain was an insult to the nation and the only response it merited was its total rejection. A nation is either free or not free. The farce of partial freedom cannot stand in the face of an emergency like the war. An indication of the direction in which the country's mind was moving was provided by a resolution of the Working Committee, dated July 14. It stated:

Events happening from day to day and experiences that the people of India are passing through confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately, not only because foreign domination, even at its best, is an evil in itself but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the war that is dissoluting humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interests of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, Militarism and other forms of Imperialism and the aggression of one nation over another. . . . In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule, the Congress has no desire whatever to embarrass Great Britain or Allied Powers in the prosecution of war. The Congress is, therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward and resist the Japanese aggression and to protect and help China. The Congress will be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920 when it adopted non-violence as a part of its policy, for the vindication of political rights and liberty.

After July, August. Events were moving fast and the tempo of popular feeling was rising faster. Both sides were preparing for a show-down which now seemed inevitable.

The All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on August 7. The Session was momentous in every sense of the word. In his opening speech, the President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, observed "The Congress wanted to see that

every Indian youth took part in resisting aggression. The 'Quit India' demand does not mean the physical removal of all Britishers from India but it means the transfer of charge." "It was a meeting of Congressmen but that the voice of the Congress was the voice of the whole country was emphasized by Mahatmaji in the following words, "The Congress represents the whole of India. It has claimed ever since its birth to represent the whole nation." The famous resolution, known as the Quit India Resolution, was moved by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In his speech, the latter observed "If America and England were still thinking that they could fight their enemies from India without the co-operation of 400 millions of people they were foolish. It must dawn on the people that this war was a people's war and they should fight for their country and their freedom," and, while winding up the debate, Pt. Jawaharlal said "This resolution is not a threat. It is an invitation. It is an explanation. It is an offer of co-operation. But still behind it, there is a clear indication that certain consequences will follow if certain events do not happen. It is an offer of co-operation of a free India. On any other terms, there will be no co-operation but conflict and struggle."

The resolution was finally put to the vote on August 8 and passed, only 12 members dissenting. It is probably the most important resolution ever passed by the All-India Congress Committee. Here I can only give a few extracts from its long corpus:

The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution [The reference is to the Working Committee resolution of July 14, already referred to—*the author*] and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and for the success of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom. . . . The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure

this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. . . The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the Independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet that peril. . . The A.I.C.C. would yet again at this last moment in the interest of world freedom renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian Government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity.

The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people and when no Congress Committees can function. When this happens, every man or woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself, within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide, urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly. . . the A.I.C.C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that, by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

Mahatmaji himself spoke for full two hours, in Hindi and English. As a chronicler has described it, his speech was the charter of liberty, the quintessence of the philosophy of non-violence, the final and unanswerable indictment of British rule in this country, the symbol of friendship with China, Russia and every oppressed people of the world and a word of glorious encouragement to real and true friends

all over the globe who were ready to cherish friendships transcending barriers of race and isolation. It was a rousing call to the dormant soul of Hindustan and to every man and woman who cherished liberty. He ended his speech with these words, "I have pledged my support to Congress and the Congress will do or die." It was these words which supplied the movement with its famous slogan 'Do or Die' — *Karo Ya Maro*.

Mahatmaji also indicated that he had no intention of starting the movement in a hurry. He stated: "I shall make every effort to see the Viceroy or address a letter to him and wait for his reply before starting the struggle. It may take a week or a fortnight or three weeks."

But the opportunity for such contacts never came. Quite understandably, the Government had no intention of allowing the rebel Generalissimo to organise his forces and send his instructions to subordinate echelons. By the morning of the 9th of August, Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee as well as most of the other important leaders were prisoners. Some others were arrested en route from Bombay to their home districts. Such others, as had not been able to go to Bombay to attend the meeting, were arrested by the evening. I was among the number. By the morning of the next day, the news of these happenings reached the remotest corners of the country, as a matter of fact, of the whole civilized world. The war had begun.

The net had been so widely thrown and so tightly drawn that the Government had every reason to be satisfied with the success of its first move. Most of the leaders had simply walked into its parlour by concentrating themselves in Bombay and the others had been so carefully shadowed that there was little difficulty in apprehending them. Detailed instructions had not reached subordinate committees and little danger was to be expected from the spasmodic and uncoordinated activities of individuals acting on their own initiative. The Government could reasonably anticipate the early collapse of the movement. I may mention, however, that people were not entirely unaware of the lines on

which Gandhiji's mind was working. Mr. Amery, the Secretary of State, described in Parliament the steps which had been chalked out by Congress leaders before arrest. The report of his speech could not be suppressed and it served to give the public some idea of the instructions which would have been issued, had the leaders been free to do so. We should express our belated thanks to Mr. Amery for his indiscretion.

But the unexpected happened, upsetting all the careful calculations of the authorities. As a matter of fact, Congress leadership behind the bars was as much surprised as the authorities themselves. When the Quit India resolution sanctioned 'the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale' and gave the freedom to every man or woman participating in this movement 'to function for himself or herself', its sponsors could not have imagined the course which events would take. The old techniques of courting arrest were clearly out-of-date in such a context but no one had had time to think of new ones.

It goes to the credit of the nation that the instructions about non-violence were, on the whole, obeyed, at least in the letter. No Englishman's life and no English woman's honour was ever insecure and no Englishman's property was touched. There was plenty of violence in thought but overt acts of violence were not perpetrated, in the face of the gravest provocation. But such non-violence was limited to private individuals only: there were no scruples about attacking and injuring Government property and, in cases of continued resistance, dealing strongly with Government personnel of Indian nationality.

The ingenuity displayed by our volunteers — it was a kind of *levy en masse* and everyone who worked in the name of the Congress was a volunteer — was remarkable. Some of us of the older generation took a little time to adjust ourselves to the new situation, the new techniques, about which we learnt from new entrants to prison and from smuggled newspapers. Pliers were used to remove nuts and bolts from railway tracks to make them unserviceable and,

near Banaras, sticks of dynamite from the stone quarries in Mirzapur were also used for the purpose. In every such case, however, timely warning was given to on-coming trains, so as not to inflict any injury on passengers. In some cases, trains were chivalrously escorted to their destinations with Congress flags flying from engine-heads. Railway stations were damaged, burnt out or demolished. In some cases letter-boxes were also tampered with. Telegraph poles were pulled down and telegraph wires cut with scissors with insulated handles. Congress flags were put up from Police stations and court-houses, in some cases volunteers themselves taking up the functions of presiding officers of the courts for short periods. In a few places, Ballia in our province for example, British rule seemed to have disappeared for almost a week. There even the jail was broken open and political prisoners released.

While such activities were going on, there was no actual increase in crime and, apart from the political front, no disturbance of law and order. Communal organisations, like the Muslim League, kept themselves severely in the background and Liberal opinion generally contented itself with a mild criticism of the Congress and equally mild criticism of the retaliatory measures adopted by the Government and the treatment meted out to political offenders.

The Government was not idle in meeting this menace. Those who challenged authority had to be prepared to face the anger of a Government engaged in a life and death struggle. The maxim that all is fair in war was thoroughly acted upon and people whom the Government still claimed to be its subjects were subjected to treatment which no civilized state admits meting out to the residents of enemy territory occupied by its army. There were farcical trials, to be sure, in many cases and some of the accused put up their defence, because they were not regular Congressmen. But brutal sentences were awarded, including flogging, and they were carried out before the convicted persons had had the opportunity to prefer appeal. I shall refer to this matter in some detail in the next chapter.

The tactics of the Government gave birth to a class of workers, not known to our previous movements. As time went on, procedures for carrying on secret communications with distant places had been developed into a science. While every locality was thrown more or less on its own resources and while local leadership often composed of students, barely literate peasants, women with children in arms, had shown extraordinary initiative and courage, there was still room for co-ordination of effort. There were a large number of 'Covers', apparently innocuous citizens who seemed to have no interest in politics, but there also came into existence a class of men who worked underground. Some of them were badly wanted by the Police but they managed to evade arrest. Some ran local cells but others walked up and down the country, constituting a thin but firm line of communications which the Government was never able to break. Their lives were lives of perpetual risk and adventure.

No history of this glorious episode in our history could be complete without a reference to the ignoble role played by the Communist Party. This poison seems to have found a place in our body politic specifically to thwart India's legitimate aspirations. It was a baby in 1932 but did its best to oppose the movement through its influence among Bombay workers. In 1942, it was stronger and attempted a more dangerous game. Prior to the war, England was, of course, an imperialist country and no terms of abuse were too strong for it. But since Russia entered the war as one of England's allies, everything became changed entirely. It became a duty to lend every support to England which was helping the Fatherland of Communism to win the war. From an imperialist war, it became a 'People's War'! Indian leaders in prison were maligned as traitors and the war, the nation was waging for freedom was described as an act of treason, meriting the highest condemnation. It so came to pass that the underground worker had as much suspicion of the Communist as of the Police. The Communists helped the Government to keep factory workers in

check, so that they may not go on strike and impede war work. The people did not look with kindly eyes on this group, deriving its moral, and probably, material sustenance from abroad and treated them with the contempt and distrust which they deserved but there can be no doubt that the presence in our midst of this unpatriotic body of men, more interested in the good of a foreign nation than in the freedom of their own country, was of great help, psychological and otherwise, to the British in their efforts to suppress Indian nationalism. As we know, the Party is still following the same anti-Indian path. It refuses to admit that the Chinese are aggressors, although sizeable chunks of Indian territory have passed into the forcible occupation of China.

As I have said earlier, the movement of 1942 was a glorious chapter of Indian history. The initiative and powers of leadership, the courage and self-sacrifice which it called forth, were traits of character of which any nation may well be proud.

It could not last for ever. Material as well as psychological reasons determine the course of such movements. What was, at first, a mighty current dwindled to a thin stream and, later, became a stagnant pool. I was one of those men who were not destined to witness the course of any of the movements which they had helped to organise, as they were invariably clapped into prison at the very beginning. But I could see the flow of political workers coming to prison reduce itself to a thin trickle and then came almost to a stop. This was inevitable, but the movement had left behind an aftermath in the form of frustration and resentment against foreign rule that was ineradicable. The iron had entered very deep indeed into the nation's soul.

Prison life was very much what it had been on previous occasions. I had the opportunity, while in Banaras District Jail, to give a series of lectures on Socialism. One of those who attended my classes was Shri Rajnarain Singh, the stormy petrel of our political life, who is at present leader of the Socialist Party in the U.P. Legislature. He is an indefatigable

worker and a man who generally manages to keep his temper unruffled even in the midst of provocation. As one who has known him for quite a long time and had the privilege of introducing him to socialist theory, I must say that I feel sorry that he is allowing his energy and talents to run to seed. At a time when great things are calling for workers to take them up, it is a sin to run after petty objectives which lead only to momentary triumphs of little importance.

From Banaras I was transferred to Bareilly where I served the greater part of my sentence. There I had for my companions Shri Purushottam Das Tandon and Shri Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. It would not be out of place to say a few words about Shri Kidwai, Rafi Saheb as he was generally called. I should like to pay my tribute to one of his great qualities: the breath of communal feeling seems never to have touched him. He was a man who would go all out to help his friends in need and even a stranger would never appeal to him for help in vain. He was opposed to the Congress Socialist Party from its very inception but, as a matter of fact, he was more Socialist in his outlook than many who formally belonged to one or other Socialist group. I remember a story, illustrating his ingenuity and sense of humour. During our movements, our mail was censored and envelopes often arrived so carelessly re-pasted that the letter would be torn and sometimes rendered unreadable. Rafi Saheb once addressed an envelope to himself, the letter inside being addressed to 'Dear Mr. Censor'. The latter was requested to have envelopes re-pasted a little more carefully, because obviously he was not interested in making the letter useless for the addressee. The trick worked. Rafi, at least, began to receive his letters in a more serviceable condition. We often differed violently on a hundred different subjects but our personal relations continued to be excellent till the last. He had tea with me, the evening preceding his untimely death by heart failure. By his demise, the country lost a great patriot and a great tower of strength to the national movement. He left behind a large number of beneficiaries

to mourn his loss. A splendid mausoleum has been built over his tomb in Masauli, his native village.

Another fellow-prisoner was Dr. Brahmanand Agnihotri. He was one of my pupils at the Prem Maha Vidyalaya, Brindaban, and had lived with me for some years after that. He proceeded to Europe after taking his degree here. In Germany, he took his doctorate in Agriculture and stayed in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia for about 20 years. Being a British subject, he had to come home on the outbreak of the war to avoid being made a prisoner by the Germans. Because of his long stay in Germany, he was a suspect here as well and was thrown into prison.

This time, as before, my time was spent mostly in reading and writing. It was in the Bareilly Central Prison that I completed *Chidvilasa*, my book on philosophy. I was never a good hand at games, in-door or out-door, but found considerable enjoyment in watching Tandonji and Rafi Saheb playing chess. It was in jail, also, that I contracted gout. This disease has become a curse of my life. People often wonder how a strict vegetarian and teetotaller like myself can get gout. Doctors also often ask this question. I do not know, except that I must be working out some particularly bad *karma* of the past. In any case, I have resigned myself to the belief that I am not going to be cured in this life.

XVII

LEST WE FORGET

As INDICATED in the previous chapter, I wish to describe in this chapter some of the steps taken by the Government to suppress the movement and demoralise the nationalist forces. I am not doing so because of any sadistic pleasure in recounting the story of those atrocities or of the desire to rouse feelings of anger and indignation against the British. But it is my feeling that those days should not be forgotten. We were waging a war that was unique in the history of humanity. An unarmed nation was striving to achieve its freedom by non-violent means. Had ours been an armed revolt, history would have preserved a record of it in the form of statistics of casualties, of the killed and the maimed. But no such records of our war of independence are available. A generation has grown up which knows nothing of the days of our slavery and the struggle that was waged to end it. It would know nothing of the price that was paid in blood and travail for that freedom which it would be enjoying. The names of a few great leaders would be known, even humbler folks like myself might get some mention in a corner. But nothing would be known about the nameless warriors, the anonymous men and women whose sacrifice of all that man holds dear made India independent. A non-violent soldier's task is infinitely more difficult than that of a man with arms. He invites untold pain and suffering on himself without raising a finger in retaliation. All honour to such heroes. We can never repay the debt we owe them but let us not forget what they had to undergo, that the country may be free.

The question of atrocities committed by agents of the Government came up for discussion in the Central Assembly on September 15, 1942 and was debated upon for four days. Reports read out by members showed how young men were subjected to slaps, fisticuffs and kicks, made to lie down

with a man sitting on their chests and caned on the soles of their feet, how police and troops committed acts of vandalism, wanton destruction and loot of private property, burning of whole villages, extortion of money and physical torture. There were cases of crowds being machinegunned from the air. Defending the action of the Government, the Home Member, Shri Reginald Maxwell made a long speech which was characterised by one of the members, Sardar Sant Singh, "as a narrative of half-truths, falsehoods and, in most cases, lies."

A village in Madhya Pradesh, named Chimur, gained special notoriety in this connection. In the course of a clash with the Police, a crowd became violent and four officials were killed. This was highly regrettable and universally condemned. But the retaliatory measures adopted by the authorities transcended all bounds. Terrorism was let loose and the Police were left free to do what they pleased. Among other excesses, there were several cases of rape. Prof. Bhansali undertook a fast on this account. Special censorship was imposed on the Press which was asked not to publish any news about Prof. Bhansali or his fast. In reply, the Standing Committee of the Newspaper Editors' Conference decided that no newspaper should publish circulars from Government Houses, New Year Honours' lists and speeches of members of the British Government as well as the Indian and Provincial Governments. After Prof. Bhansali had been on a fast for over 60 days, the Madhya Pradesh Government came to a partial agreement with him, promising to enquire into allegations of rape. The press ban was then raised.

According to official figures, reluctantly released by the Government, the net result of all kinds of Government actions from August to December 1942 was as follows:

Persons arrested	60,229
Persons detained without trial	18,000
Persons killed by Police or Military action	940*
Persons injured in such actions	1,630

* According to non-official estimates, over 5,000.

The army was called out on 60, and the Police resorted to firing on 538 occasions, planes being used for machine-gunning unarmed crowds on 5 occasions. These figures are a gross understatement.

The cruelties committed by the agents of the Government and condoned by it produced a serious reaction even on those who had nothing to do with the Congress. Shri Allah Bakhsh, Premier of Sindh, renounced all the honours he had received from the Government and was, in consequence, forced to resign, on the ground that he had forfeited the confidence of the Governor. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerji, Finance Minister, West Bengal, resigned his office as a protest against the policy of the Government of India.

These accounts should be sufficient to give an idea of what the people had to suffer for their participation in, and sympathy for, the struggle for independence. I propose, however, to give a few specific instances which will help to throw vivid light on the happenings of that period. They relate to my own district, Banaras.

In 1945, the Banaras District and City Congress Committees, appointed a Committee to enquire into excesses committed by the authorities during the 1942 movement. The members of the Committee were:

Shri Abdul Salim, B.A., LL.B., Advocate — Chairman.

Shri Raj Narain Singh.

Shri Sita Ram Jauhari.

Shri Raghunath Singh, M.A., LL.B., Advocate — Secretary.

The Committee submitted its report in September 1945. An idea of the labour undertaken by the Committee and the care it took to make its report accurate may be formed from the following paragraph in the Introduction:

The Committee have recorded the statements of 127 witnesses, got the reports from 217 persons, consulted the records of 57 decided cases, seen the register of admission and discharge of the King Edward, Marwari and S. S. Hospital of the Banaras Hindu University, in order to ascertain the names of dead and wounded persons. The Committee

has inspected 13 places and consulted six local dictators, i.e. Messrs. Damodar Das Shah, Satyendra Kumar Basu, Shiva Dutta Vaidya, Hariphal Singh, Siya Ram and Sital Prasad Srivastava occasionally. The original file of the report consists of 1,414 pages. . . . The Committee has not hesitated to get information from Government officials also.

It would, obviously, be impossible to incorporate the whole report with its 198 pages of closely typed fullscap in this chapter. I shall, therefore, confine myself to a few salient items.

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Lathi charges | 14 places |
| 2. Police Firings | |
| (a) Places | 23 |
| (b) Civilians killed | 18 |
| (c) Civilians injured | 178 |
| (d) Policemen killed in melee | 3 |
| (e) Policemen injured in melee | 3 |
| 3. People who died as a result of beating by the Police | 3 |
| 4. People beaten, many of them being first tied to trees | 73 |
| 5. Women raped | 5 (at least) |
| Two of these were a mother and daughter raped together in a station waiting-room. | |
| 6. Cases of misbehaviour towards women—Numerous. | |
| I shall relate only one. The Police raided the house of Jamna Dube but could not find him at home. They held a child over the flames and threatened to roast it alive. It was spared only when the mother threw before them a gold ornament which she was wearing round her neck. In one case, a woman was forced to leave her house when she was about to give birth to a child. The child was actually born before she could reach the house of one of her relations. | |
| 7. Cases of public flogging—Numerous. | |
| Mr. Hardy, I.C.S. was specially given to summary trials and inflicting sentences of public flogging. There were cases in which more than 15 persons were flogged together. The law, it may be noted, prohibits such public flogging. | |
| 8. Houses razed to the ground—At least 4. | |
| The property was looted and the inmates driven away. | |
| 9. Arson—At least 8 cases. | |
| It should be remembered that the report gives full details about every incident cited by it. I have confined myself only to numbers. I am also leaving out details about property looted and standing crops destroyed. | |

Lest We Forget

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10. Fines imposed on individuals and, collectively, on villages	Rs. 1,86,819
11. Persons externed	117
12. Persons interned	4
13. Persons held as Security Prisoners	302
14. Persons sentenced to various terms of imprisonment	over 550
15. Persons sentenced to transportation for life	14
16. Persons awarded the Death Sentence	3

It should be noted that the figures under 13 and 14 overlap to some extent.

Quite naturally the tempo of the movement varied from locality to locality. We in Banaras were proud of the strength of the Congress in our city and district and were glad of the contribution we made to the national struggle. But we were not alone. Many other places, specially in Eastern United Provinces and Bihar, put up an equally gallant fight and made equally heroic sacrifices. The figures I have quoted for Banaras are only an indication but they enable us to form some idea of what the total would add up to. One can also judge how hopelessly low the figures given out by the Government are. And there can be no estimate in objective terms of the psychological factors involved, the pain and the pangs, the humiliation, the calm courage and the self-denial. Who shall measure the pain of the woman robbed of that honour which a woman treasures above everything else, the tearless sorrow of the mother hearing news of her son shot dead because he would not betray his comrades, the feelings of the wife standing a naked witness to her husband being publicly flogged? Wonderful heights of character were shown by some of the humblest among our people, men and women of the so-called low castes, poor and illiterate. And not by grown-up people alone. Children in their early teens came up for brutal treatment and put up with it with a stoic calm which does them all honour. India is the richer for what these men, women and children suffered. They awakened her sleeping soul and brought her once more in tune with her spiritual heritage. Let us pay our meed of homage to these heroes.

And there is one other lesson that must not be forgotten. Those who perpetrated these horrors were mostly Indians. With a very few exceptions, Englishmen left the dirty work of suppressing the movement to their Indian stooges. The brutal sentences were pronounced by Indian magistrates, the tortures and humiliation, the desecration of womanly virtue, the loot and arson, was inflicted mostly by Indians. The informers were Indians, as were those who sung, in prose and verse, the virtues of British rule and condemned the iniquity of those who opposed it. A few officers and men resigned — all honour to them. But the majority stayed on. Let them remain anonymous. I do not refer to such people with a view to arouse anger against them. My purpose is to show what foreign rule does to human character. It degrades and blunts the finest sentiments — it makes a man callous to the sufferings of his own people. As a matter of fact, the slave stills the voice of his conscience by becoming a bully. Having sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, he does violence to his own inner self before he can do violence to others. He knows that his foreign master looks upon him with contempt but he cannot do otherwise than kiss the foot which kicks him. Among the Indian officers were many with high academic qualifications but they had been drained of all character before being placed in positions of responsibility. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Let us guard our freedom at all costs. The loss of freedom will mean the loss of our national soul — we shall cease to be men.

XVIII

THE I. N. A.

THE HISTORY of the I.N.A., the Indian National Army to give it its full name, is really a part of the history of the national movement of 1942 but it deserves a separate chapter to itself. Ever since the establishment of British rule, India had virtually ceased to exist in an international sense. The treaties with some of the principal Indian States were as much international agreements as treaties between States in Europe and America, but the Government of India had declared that the principles of International Law had no relevance to the relations between Indian States and the Suzerain Power, and no Indian Ruler had challenged this unilateral statement.

Only once during this long period had India managed to make an appearance on the international stage and, that, a very brief one. Savarkar was arrested in England in 1907 and was brought to India for trial. When the ship touched Marseilles, he jumped overboard and swam ashore. As soon as he touched French soil, he became entitled to political asylum. The Captain of the ship asked that he be handed back and a French policeman arrested him and gave him back into custody. This was against international law and practice. A regular request for extradition should have been made and Savarkar could have been turned over to the British only after regular extradition proceedings before a regular Court. However, the French Government were not interested in a coloured man and the matter did not make much of a stir.

The I.N.A. made history in more ways than one and were responsible for International Law being invoked and applied to the full, for the first time in India. As is well known, this army was formed by Shri Subhash Chandra Bose, Subhash Babu as he was generally called and 'Netaji' as he is more popularly known. He was one of the greatest fighters of

freedom this country has known. It is unfortunate that often there were sharp differences of opinion between him and the senior leaders of the Congress. Jawaharlalji always enjoyed Mahatmaji's confidence to an extent which no one among the younger men in the Congress did, but there was always a section of Congressmen which felt that Subhash was much the abler of the two. His pronouncements certainly created embarrassing situations for the leadership. When he stood for Presidentship of the Tripura Session of the Congress in 1939, he was opposed by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaiya, who was supported by Mahatmaji himself. In fact, Mahatmaji had made the election an issue of confidence in himself. In spite of this, Subhash received support from many of the younger elements. I was one of those who had voted for him. He won and was declared President. But he was not to have a plain sailing. Mahatmaji and other senior men decided to non-cooperate with him. They declared that since they did not share his views they could not take upon themselves the responsibility of helping him to implement his policies. It was not possible for him to carry on in the face of such an attitude and he resigned. No President has had such a short tenure of office. Shri Rajendra Prasad was elected President in his place.

In May 1939, he formed the Forward Bloc, as a left-wing of the Congress. A little later, disciplinary action was taken against him for disobeying certain instructions issued under the orders of the Acting President and he was not only disqualified as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee but debarred from holding any elective office in the organization for a period of three years as from August 1939. This punishment was looked upon as vindictive by a large body of opinion and, if anything, it enhanced his popularity. The country-wide tour he undertook was a great success. I myself had the honour to be his host for three days in Lucknow. He was arrested on July 2, 1939 and went on a hunger-strike on November 25, 1940. In communicating his decision to the Government, he wrote: "What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful

self-immolation at the altar of one's cause? This is the technique of the Soul. The individual must die so that the nation may win freedom and glory." When his health began to deteriorate seriously, he was released on December 5, 1940. After coming out of prison, he shut himself up in his room, apparently devoting himself to religious exercises. He was last seen by some friends on January 16. On January 29, it was discovered that he had disappeared.

It would be impossible to find a parallel in the annals of our national struggle to the story of his adventures. It reminds one of the escape of Shivaji from his confinement in Delhi and his journey back to his own country. As soon as the escape was detected, every railway station and police outpost was alerted. But he eluded those who were on the look-out to arrest him. Reaching Peshawar on 18th January, he changed himself into a Pathan and entered Afghanistan. He stayed in Kabul for six weeks. On the 18th of March, he proceeded to the Russian frontier in the company of a German and an Italian officer. Reaching Moscow on March 27, he emplaned for Berlin which he reached on March 28. Here he stayed for nearly two years. It was in Germany that the foundations of the Indian National Army were first laid. Indians who had become prisoners in the war against Germany were invited to join a national army which would help Germany which, in its turn, would help India to liberate itself. A similar offer was made to Indian prisoners of war in Japanese hands. The response was splendid. Men flocked to the standards of the National Army. They had had ample time and leisure to study the anomalies of the situation in which they found themselves. They were fighting in the name of freedom but freedom was denied to their own country and would be denied to it at the end of the war. They were mercenaries and the mercenary is nowhere looked upon with respect. It is no wonder that they decided to make a bid for national freedom. They were not votaries of non-violence and were glad to place their military knowledge at their country's disposal. An Independence League was also formed to make all necessary organisational

arrangements. The leader of the movement knew the dangers inherent in the commitments they were entering into with the Japanese Government who would naturally have to supply the necessary military equipment. And they knew that, in any case, they would be accused by the British of conspiring to establish Japanese rule in India. At a conference in Tokyo held on March 28 to 30, 1942 with the old revolutionary Rash Behari Bose as Chairman, it was clearly announced that the objective of the Independence movement was "independence, complete, and free from foreign domination, interference or control of whatever nation." It was also resolved that military action against India should be undertaken only by the Indian National Army under the command of Indians only, aided by such military, naval or air co-operation as may be supplied by the Japanese at the specific request of the Council of Action of the Indian Independence League. Another Conference, held in Bangkok in June 1942, resolved, among other things, "to demand from the Japanese Government a further clarification of their policy towards this movement as well as towards India." How anxious the Independence League was not to become a tool of the Japanese in furtherance of their expansionist programme is evidenced by the fact that it refused to sanction the despatch of the I.N.A. to Burma unless the requisite clarification was forthcoming. This irritated the Japanese Government which arrested two of the prominent Indian leaders, General Mohan Singh and Col. Gill, and put them in solitary confinement. They even tried to build up an Indian association parallel to the League but the move failed. Eventually, they requested the German Government to let Subhash Bose come to Asia. He arrived in Singapore on July 2, 1942 and took over the presidentship of the League on July 4.

With his assumption of office, things began to move fast. The movement was reorganised and intensive training of recruits started. On August 22, 1943, a Rani of Jhansi regiment composed entirely of women under Dr. Lakshmi was raised. It had two wings, a nursing as well as a fighting

unit. It was disbanded in 1945, after giving a very good account of itself under most trying circumstances. The stirring slogan of the I.N.A. was 'DILLI CHALO'—onwards to Delhi. In a message to his troops, Subhash said, "I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory. For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, suffering, forced marches and death. It does not matter who among us will live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free and that we shall give our all to make her free. May God now bless our Army and grant us victory. In the coming fight, we shall ultimately win and our task will not end till our surviving heroes hold the victory parade on another graveyard of the British Empire, the 'Lal Qilla' (Red Fort) of Ancient Delhi."

The Provisional Government of Azad Hind² was established on October 21, 1943. Netaji, as its head, was the first man to take the oath of allegiance to India: "In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that, to liberate India, I will continue this sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life." The Government received immediate diplomatic recognition from Japan, Germany and their allies and the Japanese Government ceded the Andamans and Nicobar, the two islands in the Bay of Bengal, to it. They were renamed 'Shaheed Dwipa' and 'Swaraj Dwipa'. The enthusiasm which the establishment of the Provisional Government evoked is evinced by the fact that the Indian population living in South East Asia contributed over 8 crores of rupees towards its funds.

There is no need to give a detailed account of what the Army did during its brief career. It marched up to India's eastern frontier, although its equipment was not what it should have been. The Japanese support fell considerably short of expectations. The surrender of Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima broke the back of the movement. Japan's western Allies had already been defeated. The I.N.A. became a band of stragglers and had no option left but to surrender. What happened to Subhash Bose is still

wrapped in mystery. He is reported to have met his death as the result of an air accident but, among those who cherish his memory with respect and affection, there are some who believe that he is still alive and will some day come to India to lead the country to greater glory and prosperity. Thus ended a brief but glorious chapter of our history. It ended in defeat but a defeat that did not bring ignominy to those who took part in that fight. All honour to their memory and the memory of their great leader.

It is unfortunate that Netaji was never able to secure Mahatmaji's blessings. In an article in the *Harijan*, written shortly before the starting of the Quit India Movement, Gandhiji said, "I have no desire whatsoever to woo any power to help India in her endeavour to free herself from the foreign yoke. I have no desire to exchange the British for any other rule. Better the enemy I know than the one I do not. Therefore, there can be no question of my approval of Subhash's policy. He is misguided and his ways can never lead to India's deliverance." It is, therefore, heartening to find that Subhash, on his part, never bore any ill-will to Mahatmaji. On July 6, 1944, he broadcast a message, specially for Mahatmaji in which he said, "After having served my people so long to the best of my ability, I could have no desire to be called a traitor. Thanks to the generosity and to the affection of my countrymen, I had obtained the highest honour which it was possible for any public worker in India to achieve. If I had the slightest hope that without help from abroad we could attain Swaraj, I would never have left India during such a crisis. I have risked my life and my future career. Father of our nation, in this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings and good wishes."

This was not to be. He received neither. There was universal appreciation in the country for his patriotism and courage. Even those leaders who had always tried to keep him at arm's length could not withhold their grudging meed of praise when the news of his death arrived but not an iota of moral support had been extended to him from such quarters.

The I.N.A. had vanished from the scene as a living force but the last act in the drama of its life had yet to be played before the curtain fell. Every one was anxious about the fate of these brave men. There could be no doubt about the intention of the British Government. It wanted to treat them as deserters and try them for treason. The object, of course, was not so much to punish these men as to teach a lesson to Indian armed personnel which it would not easily forget, should similar circumstances arise at any time in the future. The Indian public was not prepared to take this lying down. Even the Congress leadership was forced, by the pressure of public opinion, to take an active interest in their defence. Funds were voluntarily subscribed and legal advice offered free of charge.

The leading defence counsel was Shri Bhulabhai Desai, one of the most brilliant advocates that the Indian bar has produced. The line of defence that Shri Desai adopted was entirely new, one for which the Government could hardly have been prepared. He lifted the case entirely out of the purview of the Indian Penal Code and brought it within the jurisdiction of International Law. He based his defence on the universally accepted assumption that every nation has the right to be free and if under foreign domination, to make every legitimate effort to achieve its freedom. There is the further assumption, accepted in International Law, that the use of violence is a legitimate means for the purpose. The use of violence is, however, permitted under certain specific conditions, viz.,

(i) Those resorting to it must be acting under the orders of some definite authority.

(ii) They must be wearing a specific uniform or other recognisable symbol and must be acting as regular soldiers for the time being, not using arms intermittently on the sly and then quietly slipping back into civil occupations, and

(iii) They must conform to the rules of war recognised by the Geneva or other international Conventions.

It was the aim of the Government to show that the I.N.A. did not satisfy these conditions. Shri Desai's task was to prove,

with a wealth of factual proofs and international case law, that they did. As regards (i), it was established that these men were working under the authority of the Provisional Government which was in diplomatic relation with a number of States whose status was never in dispute. Moreover, it was in occupation of the Andamans and Nicobar and had complete jurisdiction over this territory. This government, therefore, had the status at least of what is called "a Civilized Belligerent Community not being a State" in International Law. The second condition was also fully satisfied and so was the third. These men were whole-time soldiers who were strictly following the rules of civilised warfare. They could, therefore, not be treated as ordinary criminals but as prisoners of war who had to be released at the cessation of hostilities.

Shri Desai won the case. He proved it to the hilt and the Government had no option but to release the men. The news was received with unprecedented joy all over the country. Their position as fighters of freedom was rehabilitated and the names of the three principal accused Dhillon, Sahgal and Shah Nawaz became household words. Later, they took up civilian occupations. Dr. Lakshmi, the leader of the Rani of Jhansi regiment, is now the wife of Sahgal, her comrade in the I.N.A.

Shri Bhulabhai Desai was in very bad health when he took up the case. Under the strain to which he put himself, there was a complete breakdown and he died soon after.

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THE NEXT TWO YEARS

THE MOVEMENT started with so much enthusiasm and carried on at such heavy cost had failed to achieve its objective. But the British Government was not happy at its success. What it had gained was at best a pyrrhic victory. It knew that it would not be able to retain India for long. The anger and frustration which the people felt would not allow a rapprochement on the old terms. It is also possible that the Government's feeling of insecurity was enhanced by the presence, within the country, of large numbers of demobilised soldiers trained in the use of arms and in the habit of working as organised groups. Many of these men had served in foreign lands and fought in the name of freedom. It was understandable that they should feel the shame of being mercenaries, fighting merely for the sake of money to secure for others what would be denied to their own country.

Gandhiji was released on May 6, 1944 on medical grounds. Shortly after, he wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, seeking an interview with him and asking for permission to meet the members of the Working Committee in prison, promising to advise them to withdraw the movement completely and offer full co-operation in the war-efforts, provided a declaration of immediate independence were made and an interim government responsible to the Central Assembly were set up. The Viceroy refused to see Gandhiji or to consider his proposals as a possible basis for discussion. Gandhiji then approached Mr. Jinnah to explore the possibility of the Congress and the League making a joint national demand. The negotiations dragged on for three weeks but no agreement could be arrived at.

But events moved rapidly and the Viceroy had to go to London to consult the British Cabinet on Indian Constitutional Reform. On return, he released the members of the Congress Working Committee, to be followed, a short

time later, by the release of all members of the All-India Congress Committee. He broadcast the following among other proposals:

- (a) A new Viceregal Executive Council to be formed after consulting Indian leaders, all the members of the Council except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief being Indians.
- (b) The portfolio of External Affairs to be held by an Indian.
- (c) A British High Commissioner to be appointed in India as in other Commonwealth countries.

To discuss these and other matters, he invited a number of Indian leaders to a Conference in Simla. The Congress allowed its representatives to attend the Conference which met on 25th June, 1945. It broke up on July 16, for failure to arrive at any agreement. This result was inevitable and had been foreseen from the very beginning. Lord Wavell had based his proposal on Hindu-Muslim parity and this placed a powerful weapon in the hands of communal interests.

In January 1946, a team of ten members of Parliament, representing all parties, toured the country. Quite obviously such a delegation had no serious political value.

Soon after the return of this body, Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister, announced that a Cabinet Mission composed of Lord Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Alexander would be going to India to explore avenues of early achievement of freedom by India.

The Mission arrived in Delhi on March 24, 1946.

It is not my purpose to deal at length with events that followed the discussions held by the Mission with representatives of Indian opinion. It is recent history and I cannot contribute any information not easily available. The coming into office of an Interim Government with Congress and Muslim League participation, the uneasy working of that Government, the communal riots that threatened to disrupt the whole of northern India and the final political arrangements with Britain — some of these questions are still matters of debate among political parties. The most

controversial of these arrangements was the Partition of the country, Lord Wavell's parting gift, or, as many would say, parting kick to India.

A very large section of public opinion in India^o has not been able to reconcile itself to the Partition. People feel that it could have been avoided, if Congress leadership had been a little more patient, a little more courageous. The advent of Swaraj might conceivably have been delayed a little but territorial integrity would have been retained. It is no use crying now over spilt milk. Let us hope that the relations between the two countries will be such as will lead to the prosperity and happiness of both. The oldest memories of the Indian people, particularly of the Hindus, are linked up with rivers and mountains in Pakistan and Hindu religion and culture blossomed in the plains of that country. Similarly, Muslim art and culture in India^o developed, and has left its finest monuments, in Bharat.

The tragedy of the Partition was that it was effected in the face of Gandhiji's opposition. He urged in vain with the members of the Working Committee not to be parties to this vivisection of the country. But they would not listen to him. As the ship neared its destination, the decision was taken to drop the pilot. The Mahatma's heart was broken. It was not for this that he had worked all his life. His anguish was all the greater because the acceptance of the Partition meant the acceptance of the Two-Nation Theory — the theory that Hindus and Muslims are two distinct nations — which the Congress had all along resisted. Islam being a proselytising religion, it was inconceivable how a Hindu convert to Islam could change his nationality at the same time.

The Congress Working Committee was prepared to go very far to meet the wishes of Mr. Jinnah and other Muslim League leaders. But they would not listen. They were not prepared to live in undivided India on any terms. The only alternatives before the Congress were either to acquiesce in the partition of the country or to reject the offer of independence altogether. If Gandhiji had had his way, the offer

would probably have been rejected. Independence would have been delayed; along with struggles carried on against Government, there might have been a continued tussle with the League but, in the end, the whole country would have been free, as one unit. But the members of the Working Committee could not take such a decision. No doubt they had weighty reasons on their side and it was no pleasure to them to take a step against Mahatmaji's clear wishes. No decision of vital importance had so far been taken during the last twenty-five years against his advice. But they felt that their responsibility demanded that this be done.^o It shows the greatness of Mahatmaji that once he knew what the Working Committee had done, he did not challenge their right to do so. Dr. Rajendra Prasad points out in his Introduction to Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, "At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which considered this question, he vigorously supported the stand taken up by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel against those who wanted to raise the standard of rebellion against the old Congress leadership."

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It is not my purpose to describe at great length the events of these fifteen years. They are within the memory of the present generation. The Congress has been ruling the country during all this period. For a short time, the Communists got in control of affairs in Kerala. In a way, this was good. The people received a foretaste of what Communist absolutism would be like, which, I hope, they will not easily forget.

The victory of the Congress at the polls was overwhelming and it came into power both at the Centre and in the States on August 15, 1947. This day is known as Independence Day. The new Governments were working within the framework of the Government of India Act, 1935 with suitable amendments and Shri Rajgopalachari was the last Governor-General of India and the first Indian to occupy that post. A Constituent Assembly had been set up under the Chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The Constitution framed by it came into effect on January 26, 1950. This date, previously known as Independence Day, is now celebrated as Republic Day. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected the first Rashtrapati (President).

The new Constitution is republican in form. There is no room in it for a monarch. Being federal in character, it resembles the American Constitution in certain respects but, in its adoption of the Cabinet System of Government, it leans heavily on British conventions. In one important respect, we have introduced into International Law, a concept so far wholly unknown to it. England and the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations are connected to one another by the fact of having a common king. But India is a republic. She cannot have a king, and yet, she has elected to remain within the Commonwealth. An independent republic under a hereditary monarchy is

an anomaly but the anomaly exists and seems to be functioning to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The Constitution suffers from a number of serious defects. It is not based on Indian ways of living or the principles laid down by Indian political thinkers. And the framing of it was mainly assigned to jurists and constitutional lawyers. These gentlemen may have been eminent in their own spheres but they were out of touch with the lives, the hopes and aspirations, of the common people. Most of them had taken no part in the National Movements for independence and were not attuned to the heart-strings of the Congress worker, his ideas and ideals. To them, Mahatma Gandhi was an enigma, whose teachings could not be translated into the procedures of public administration. The result of their labours is a scissors-and-paste document which has already had to be revised a number of times. It is unnecessarily voluminous and goes into details which need not find a place in a constitution. In this way, it hampers the easy transaction of public business. I am afraid that some day it will have to undergo drastic changes. It would, perhaps, be better to scrap it altogether and start *de novo*.

The events of the last fifteen years are really a record of the work of Congress governments. While Congressmen are, on the whole, satisfied with the record, other political parties are not. I do not wish to enter the lists in this controversy. Having been a member of Government all through, I would have to take up a defensive role to justify my own work and that of my colleagues. During the time that Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant was Chief Minister, I had the good fortune to come into intimate contact with a number of departments, Education, Finance, Labour, Police and Jails and Religious Endowments. At one time, I held so many portfolios that the late Shri B. G. Kher jocularly remarked that I was 'half the U.P. Government.' On Shri Pant's departure for Delhi to take up the work of the Union Home Minister, I succeeded him as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the name which this part of the country now bears instead of United Provinces. It is the most populous state

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in India, the cradle of Indian culture, the seat of great empires and heir to some of the most sacred traditions in our life. It was a great privilege to have had the opportunity to serve it for some time. I have the satisfaction to have performed my duty according to my lights. It is for others to judge how far I succeeded.

No student of the history of the last three decades can fail to be struck by the dominant position occupied by the towering personality of Pt. Govind Ballabh Pant, Pantji as he has been affectionately known all over the country. A great parliamentarian, a powerful speaker, at home both in Hindi and English, an able administrator, he has left an indelible impression on our public life. Suave, courteous to both friend and foe, possessed of a keen sense of humour, a lover of art, particularly music, deeply religious, he made his influence felt in every sphere of public activity. The way he had been carrying on his heavy duties, in the midst of long and painful illness which had recently even crippled his movements, was an inspiration in itself. I was with him only a couple of days before his final stroke of paralysis and was again there during the last five days of his illness. Recent political events in Uttar Pradesh, leading to my resignation, had unfortunately created some slight misunderstanding between us. This evidently weighed deeply on his mind and, a few minutes before he passed into coma, he referred to this fact. I feel almost guilty that I should have contributed to his worries even if unwittingly, when he was in such delicate health. The task of the pioneer is always a difficult one. The success with which he performed it in post-independence India needs no proof. Our association extended over a period of thirty-five years and ripened into a personal relationship which makes the pain of parting more poignant. As we know, he died on March 7, 1961.

The manner in which I had to leave office was a unique event in our constitutional history. But I shall not touch upon it here. It is difficult to be purely objective in such matters and I do not wish to drag the top leadership of the Congress, generally known as the High Command, into

public controversy. It is for them to reflect coolly on the whole episode and to decide how far they have helped democracy to grow firm roots in Indian soil.

The most important event of this period was the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, on Friday, 30th January, 1948, at the age of 78. It is not possible easily to describe the wave of horror, grief and anger which swept the country as the news reached the people. Everyone was stunned for a moment. The first reaction was that the murderer must be a Muslim. Soon after came the news that he was a Hindu named Godse. Half-an-hour's delay would have cost, Heaven knows, how many Muslims their lives. The death of the Father of the Nation was felt as a personal loss by thousands and young and old, men and women, wept as they would not have wept, even at the death of a near relation by blood. The murderer was a fanatic who believed that Mahatmaji's pro-Muslim leanings were endangering the safety of India, Hindu Society in particular. Mahatmaji was killed, 'He Rama' on his lips, on his way from Birla House to his evening prayer meeting. It is a pity that all the security arrangements of the Government of India failed to anticipate this foul deed and protect this great life. Men come and go. India has seen many saintly men and many statesmen and will see many more, but a Mahatma Gandhi is not born every day. Such men come once in several millennia and they belong to all times and countries. The whole of humanity is hallowed by them.

It is a misfortune that Gandhiji's last days were not as happy as they should have been. Perhaps this is a tragedy of all great souls, Buddha being probably the only exception. Rama, Krishna, Jesus — their ends were unhappy. It was not only that they all met unnatural deaths; what was much worse was the sense, at least with Rama, Krishna and Gandhi, of a mission that had failed.

There were terrible communal riots in Noakhali in Pakistan and Bihar. Gandhiji travelled far and wide over this area, shaming those who, in the name of God, had desecrated and destroyed His living temples by the thousand,

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solacing those who were in pain, and their name was literally legion, and bringing a message of courage and confidence to those who had lost all hope and were passing their days and nights in fear of death and dishonour. His health was broken, but his spirit was dauntless as ever. And yet all these happenings could not but leave a deep scar on his soul. He had worked for communal harmony all his life but, apparently, his efforts had borne no fruit. Such accord as had seemed to exist was barely skin-deep and liable to be destroyed by outbursts of passion for which there was no rational basis at all. No wonder Gandhiji was in travail.

But there were deeper causes for his anguish. Deep ideological differences between himself and his colleagues of the Working Committee had begun to make themselves felt. Before his time, Religion and Politics, were two entirely different domains but through his technique of Satyagraha and his insistence on Truth and Non-Violence, he had sanctified Politics. He visualised a constitution for India based on the concepts sponsored by Bhishma and Shukra, but these concepts found no place in what the Constituent Assembly had laboriously produced. His ideal of *Ram Rajya*, the Kingdom of God on Earth, was nowhere near realization. And the country, the India for which he had lived and worked, was divided into two parts. This partition of the country had been accepted by the Congress leadership in spite of Gandhiji's strong protest. His words had apparently ceased to carry that weight with them which was formerly attached to them. And, to add to his other worries, there was serious discord among the leaders themselves. A letter, written by Gandhiji to Sardar Patel in January 1947 and quoted in Shri Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*, throws a flood of light on this subject. "I heard many complaints against you. . . . They say, you talk about sticking to office. . . . If we deviate from the straight path by ever so little, we are done for. There is not that unison in the Working Committee that there should be." And Sardar's reply is equally revealing "The charge that

I want to stick to office is a pure concoction. I was only opposed to Jawaharlal's hurling idle threats of resigning from the Interim Government. They damage the prestige of the Congress and have a demoralising effect on the services. We should take a firm decision to resign first. Repetition of empty threats has lost us the Viceroy's respect and now he regards our threats of resignation as nothing but bluff. . . . If there are divisions in the Working Committee, they are not of today's growth. They have been there for a long time. At present, on the contrary, there is a very large measure of accord in most matters. If any of my colleagues has complained to you about me, I should like to know."

As Pyarelal says, Gandhiji was extremely worried. He would ask himself, Why does *Ahimsa* (non-violence) not work? It cannot be good in parts — ineffective in its immediate neighbourhood and effective elsewhere. And the answer, in so far as it was one, was characteristic of him "There must be some flaw deep down in me which I am unable to discover; where could I have missed my way?"

With Mahatmaji's death, ended a great chapter not only in India's history but in the history of humanity. His name still lives, enshrined in the memories of millions of men, all over the world. There are statues put up and buildings erected in his honour and a vast literature has grown up about him and his life-work. It has to be seen how far humanity, and specially his countrymen, tries to follow in his footsteps. I was sent by the Government of India as the leader of their deputation to the International Labour Conference in San Francisco in 1948. On one of the off-days, some of us went to a village in the interior, about fifty miles from the city. We stopped to purchase fruit at a stall. The woman in charge, finding that we were Indians, referred to Mahatmaji's murder and said, "They crucified Christ. Now they have killed Gandhi. This is how the world treats its great men." This was the tribute of a common woman of the people living thousands of miles away from India. It spoke volumes for the impact of Gandhiji's life on men and women all over the world.

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The country has adopted Secularism, Democracy and Socialism as the basic principles of its corporate life. The Congress has passed many resolutions in this connection and Congress Governments at the Centre and in the States have taken a number of administrative measures and placed a number of laws on the Statute Book with a view to implement these resolutions. I shall not discuss these resolutions, laws or administrative measures but deal with the basic principles in subsequent chapters.

There are some events, however, to which a passing reference must be made. The first among these is the merger of the States. There were about 700 of them, ranging from the big Treaty States, like Hyderabad, with revenues running into several crores, to petty chieftainships with incomes barely running into four figures. The powers enjoyed by these relics of the past also varied, the bigger ones possessing full internal sovereignty, while the smaller chieftains hardly went beyond third class magisterial powers. Matters were further complicated by the fact that some of the States were themselves tributary to some other State, but the British Government had guaranteed them protection against undue interference by their immediate suzerain. The tact and firmness of Sardar Patel resolved this tangle. Almost all the States merged in the bigger unit that is India, their Rulers being granted certain rights and privileges including privy purses. Travancore showed a little truculence, so did Jodhpur but matters never came to a head in these cases. The only State which declared its independence and showed fight was Hyderabad, a State with singularly unmilitary traditions. It had grown in size because of the crumbs thrown to it by the British as a reward for its unpatriotic services in the wars against Mysore and the Marathas. Its resistance crumbled after a minor police action. The police action came none too soon. The memory of communal disturbances was still fresh and a section of Muslim opinion in India had not been able to reconcile itself to living under what it considered to be Hindu rule. Such people felt, and their feelings were fed on Pakistani propaganda on the

radio and through secret agents, that Pakistan might yet regain control of India and the story of Afghan and Moghul rule rewritten. The stiff-neckedness of Hyderabad was a source of jubilation to such people. They looked upon it as a pocket of independent Muslim rule in the heart of Hindu India and a kind of rallying ground for the future. The abject failure of the Nizam's military ambitions was a much-needed deflation for such people. It taught them that their future lay in living as loyal citizens of India.

The invasion of Kashmir by Pakistan was another event of great importance. The Maharaja had procrastinated in the matter of signing the Instrument of Accession to India. He was presumably banking on the strategic situation of Kashmir, surrounded as it was by India, China, Russia and Afghanistan and was dreaming of independence. In any case, his procrastination placed India in a difficult position as regards the defence of Kashmir. Advantage was taken of this by Pakistan. Tribals were let loose on the country, stirred by the prospects of unrestrained loot. Later on, this pretence was also given up and Pakistani armed forces invaded the valley. Obviously, it was impossible for Kashmir to stem the tide. At the same time, India could not look on with indifference on the annexation of Kashmir. The Indian Army had to step in, in very unfavourable circumstances. The terrain, consisting of places as much as 18,000 feet high, was highly unsuitable for modern fighting. But our soldiers, under General Thimayya, gave a wonderful account of themselves and Pakistani troops were steadily pushed back. It seemed that, very soon, the invaders would be completely driven out. It was at this moment that the Government of India took a step that was bitterly criticised at the time and is criticised even today. Instead of allowing the army to finish the work it had begun so well, the Government placed the whole dispute before the United Nations Organization, of which both India and Pakistan are members. The onward march of our troops was halted but Pakistan also stayed where it was at the time. The part of Kashmir that was in Pakistani occupation is still occupied and the U.N.O.

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seems to be in no hurry to take any positive steps to force the aggressor to withdraw. People are afraid that this stalemate will continue for ever and this part of our territory will become a permanent part of Pakistan, possession, after all, being nine points of the law.

Our relations with China are today none of the happiest. There is no reason why this should have been so. The doctrine of *Panchshila* was enunciated in a joint statement between Nehru and Chou En-lai. India has been befriending China and fighting her battles on the international diplomatic stage since the days when China had no friends outside Russia. China had been claiming off and on a kind of shadowy suzerainty over Tibet for centuries, but that Tibet was an independent country was never seriously in dispute. In 1952, Chinese troops entered Tibet to liberate the country. This meant complete disappearance of its autonomy and its integration with China, followed by enforced annexation. The Tibetans resisted but were not strong enough to protect their freedom. India entered into an agreement with China that fully recognised its claims over Tibet. Many people felt then that India's action was highly unethical. China had no legal right over Tibet and she was not powerful enough, diplomatically and otherwise, to push forward, if India had protested strongly enough. As it is, China's domination over Tibet, bad as it is for that country, has brought China into contiguity with India and created a serious menace to this country as well as to Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Chinese troops have already infiltrated into our territory and occupied strips of our border areas from Ladakh to Assam. We are alert now but it is difficult to say how far our preparations will equal that of the Chinese who have been quietly going on for several years. The cynical disregard by the Chinese of a doctrine of which their own Premier was the co-sponsor opens out a new chapter in Asian diplomacy.

The presence of French and Portuguese possessions has been an eyesore to Indian nationalists for quite a long time. They look upon them very much as Frenchmen did on

Calais when it was in British hands. Happily, the question of Pondicherry and the other French possessions has been solved by negotiations. But Portugal is adamant. Her President has admitted publicly that India is militarily stronger but, taking advantage of the fact that we have been consistently deprecating the use of armed force for the settlement of international disputes, Portugal is not prepared to let go of these bits of Portugal on Indian soil, as she would have us look on these territories. The people there, are in a state of almost permanent rebellion and the question of integration of these isolated pockets, with India is only a question of time.

The independence of India has resulted not only in the simultaneous independence of Pakistan but of Burma and Ceylon, both parts of the former British Empire. Ceylon, like Pakistan, has elected for the present to remain in the Commonwealth but Burma has gone out. Indonesia has also attained her freedom from Dutch domination. It is a fact, though, that none of these countries has enjoyed continued stability as India has so far done. Suppression of democratic institutions and establishment of a military dictatorship, uprisings, rebellions and murders — such has been the sad experiences of these countries.

One of the greatest achievements of Congress rule has been the rehabilitation of the large number of people who left Pakistan and came over to us, in most cases penniless and resourceless. Most of these men are now profitably employed. It was a vast problem but tact, sympathy and administrative ability have successfully solved it, to a very large extent.

I can say with a clear conscience that, in ten years of Congress rule, the country has made strides in all directions which would not have been possible in a century of the previous regime. We have had our shortcomings but we do not claim to be more than human.

XXI

SOME INNER CONTRADICTIONS

I HAVE already referred to one of the striking contradictions in our political setup. We are a republic, our Constitution leaves no doubt upon this point. But we are members of a Commonwealth of Nations with a hereditary monarch at its head. The Indian Prime Minister attends Conferences of Commonwealth Prime Ministers on the same terms as the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia or New Zealand who are the monarch's ministers in their respective countries. This arrangement has its advantages, no doubt, but it is an anomaly nonetheless.

Our Constitution has borrowed elements both from Britain and the United States and the parts do not always fit together. We are a federation of States but, unlike America, the residual powers are vested here in the Centre. This is good. It is possible for the Central and State Governments to function successfully and efficiently within their own spheres, which are, on the whole, clearly demarcated in the schedules attached to the Constitution. But, in actual practice, things do not run so smoothly. There is a steady attempt on the part of Central ministries to encroach on the jurisdiction of the component States. During the present period of Planning, the States have necessarily to depend to a very large extent on Central assistance, and advantage is often taken of this power of the purse to bring the States round to the Centre's points of view which they are otherwise unwilling to adopt. Those constitutional provisions which give concurrent jurisdiction to the Centre and the States over certain matters are also freely invoked to extend Central control over spheres which would normally fall into the States' sector. At times this creates irritation and there have been occasions when State ministers have expressed the view that the Constitution had better be scrapped and the country made a unitarian State under

one government. Similar trends in the direction of centralization are visible in other federal states also. The point worth noting is that, in countries which are socially, economically, racially and culturally more homogeneous than we are, centralisation may perhaps be beneficial. With us, decentralisation with a wide variety of patterns, within an elastic general framework, seems to be called for. Incidentally, a large country like ours needs to provide opportunities for the utilisation of talent on a much larger scale than any scheme of centralisation can fruitfully afford. I know that there is no move for a change in the constitution. I am only referring to certain dangerous tendencies that are becoming increasingly manifest. There is less and less inclination to treat State Governments as partners in a common endeavour and a growing inclination to treat them as subordinates and agents, whose outlook is normally narrow and who cannot be trusted to take important decisions by themselves.

A very important question has recently come up before the public which raises very fundamental issues. What is the relation between the President and the Prime Minister? In other words, is the President's status circumscribed like that of a constitutional monarch, the King of England for example, or does it correspond to some extent to that of the President of the United States. Both England and America are democracies: neither position would detract from the democratic nature of our setup. I do not want to attempt an interpretation of the letter of our Constitution. That is a work for lawyers. Nor is it necessary for me to delve into constitutional history in search of precedents. My approach to the question is more pragmatic.

We have adopted a political pattern which, however suitable it may be to conditions in certain Western countries, is not adapted to the pattern of life here. As a matter of fact, it has not proved much of a success even in all countries in the West. It ignores our historical background and the social milieu. Such wholesale borrowing can never be successful. Cracks are already appearing upon the wall.

A dictatorship might, perhaps, impose its will by force of arms, but so far we have not set up a dictatorship. We have undertaken social legislation which might enhance our reputation for progressiveness in Western eyes but it is breaking up our social life and creating vacuums which were either not anticipated or not provided for. All this is raising forces which may one day create a chaos. And it has to be remembered that to some extent chaotic conditions prevail in all neighbouring countries. Democracy of the Western type is not functioning successfully in any of the countries of North Africa and South Asia, not to speak of China and Russia. It has either been replaced by a more or less open dictatorship or is more or less controlled. In many cases, the army either controls the administration or has been called in to assist the government in stabilizing the administration.

Let us assess our own situation calmly. There is a riot of political groups and parties, some owing allegiance to an extra-national body, many not believing in the ballot-box as the means of coming into power. There are parties which are wedded to a policy of continuous agitation. These things conspire to make the work of civil administration very difficult. There is a colossal waste of public money and energy. And the people get fed up with this kind of life. They come to feel that civilians are unable to cope with such situations and begin to look with appreciative eyes towards neighbouring countries where military rule has been able to maintain peace and the raucous voices of contending political leaders are not heard. I am not drawing upon my imagination or stating a purely hypothetical case. Anyone who is in intimate touch with the life of our people knows that such thoughts have begun to cross people's minds here and there. Let us not ignore the warning on the wall. Let us take our decisions in this context.

We do not want a collapse of democracy and a suppression of democratic institutions. It is my firm conviction that, in our present circumstances, the only way to save democracy is to vest the President with the power to intervene in the administration, when circumstances, in his opinion, make

this necessary. No Prime Minister, belonging to one party and depending for his position on the goodwill of the majority of members in that party, can show the necessary impartiality or firmness, specially when he is faced with a welter of opposition groups with the fullest liberty to carry on smear campaigns and indulge in irresponsible talk which they know they will never be called upon to implement. The President will be a person above parties. No wise President will unnecessarily interfere with the administration and thus generate frictions where none need exist. But the power should be there: the more sparsely it is used, the more public support it is likely to get. This may look like a mild kind of dictatorship. I do not quarrel over words but, whatever it is, it seems to me to be the surest method of saving the essentials of democracy and preventing the establishment of a real dictatorship, military or otherwise. It must not be forgotten that the President will be a civilian, elected for a specific term of years, not a permanent fixture.

There is another inner contradiction which the Congress has created for itself. During the days of our struggle for independence, we had a hierarchy of committees from the *mandal* to the all-India level. The jurisdictions of these committees corresponded to administrative revenue areas except the *mandal* which was a Congress unit smaller than the district. Mahatmaji had suggested that after independence, the Congress should cease to function as a political organisation, confining itself to constructive work, leaving free those Congressmen who wanted to engage in legislative activities to form a separate organisation of their own. This advice was not followed. The Congress continued as it was, its hierarchy of committees was retained and legislative work added on to its functions.

The Congress of 1947 was not, however, the Congress of 1921. The old Congress had nothing to offer but hard work and tears, jail, financial ruin, self-suppression, humiliation and death. The only reward was the satisfaction that comes from the performance of one's duty. The new Congress, however, offered seats in local bodies and the legislatures,

places of profit and honour, and participation in the Government. Such work does not necessarily involve high ethical values. The result was that new men, with no record of national service, began gradually to infiltrate into the Congress and, by dubious methods, to drive out genuine Congressmen whose life-long training under Mahatmaji made them singularly unable to defend themselves against such attack. Bossism began to raise its sinister head. This is not to say that all Congressmen were angels in the pre-independence days. They were not. But there was the saving grâce of our periodic movements. They provided a kind of natural purge: the selfish and cowardly were simply sieved out. Members of legislatures are selected by a wide electorate and the ministers have heavy constitutional responsibilities. On the other hand, members of the various Congress Committees are drawn from one particular party and chosen by very small groups. The office-bearers of such committees have absolutely no responsibilities and an increasing number of them have no roots in the Congress which they want to use as a jumping off platform to high office. It is these committees which indirectly control the selection of candidates to legislatures. The result of such a state of affairs can easily be foreseen. There is frequent friction between what, for want of better names, are generally known as the legislative and organisational wings. The State Government may, in the discharge of its responsibilities, decide to adopt an administrative measure which may not commend itself to the leadership of the State Congress Committee and the latter may choose publicly to criticise it. This can place the government, if it is a Congress Government, in a very awkward position, because it will find it difficult freely to meet an attack from the leaders of an organisation to which it owes allegiance. The motives behind the criticisms need not always be very clean. Such clashes have already occurred at the Centre and in the States and they may grow more frequent in the future. At the present time, most of the ministers and heads of the organisational wing at the Centre and in the States are Congressmen who have been

comrades-in-arms for years. When this old race disappears, and it is bound to do so within the next half-a-dozen years, disputes will be more bitter.

The Congress cannot continue in Government and also allow such leg-pulling from within to continue. A solution has to be found at an early date. The only solution which I can think of is to dissolve the organisational wing as it is today. It is serving no useful purpose.

It is sometimes urged that this wing is needed to carry on the constructive activities of the Congress. As a matter of fact, it is doing nothing of the kind. Congress discovered long ago that constructive work cannot be carried on in conjunction with other activities. Khadi, our most important constructive sector, was separated from the main body of the Congress about thirty years ago; separate bodies were also created for fostering village industries and *Nai Talim* (Basic Education). All these bodies are working either with the direct or indirect help of Government subsidies. The organisation as such is doing no constructive work, because it has no permanent machinery. Its essays in this field have either ended in failure or brought it in direct conflict with the Government and its agents.

Nor is it doing any useful work on the ideological front. Even today, Congress is a platform for people holding different shades of opinion. Any propaganda by the members of such a body is likely to confuse the public. The Government, on the other hand, can but follow one line of policy. And, in any case, the organisation is not doing any work on the ideological front, because there is no ideology to propagate. I shall revert to this topic in the next chapter.

These are some of the contradictions and anomalies in our political setup. Life is never governed by strict logic and there are bound to be some anomalies wherever men congregate. But glaring contradictions and defects whose results are easily foreseeable should be removed as early as possible. If this is delayed for long, frictions accumulate, till one day there is an explosion whose unfortunate results no mere reforms can remedy.

XXII

DEMOCRACY

WE HAVE adopted democracy as the basis of our Constitution. No other choice was possible or desirable. The best form of government is one by the nation's aristocracy of talent and character but such aristocracy is hard to locate. And, in any case, it is easier by devising suitable rules and conventions to approach this ideal under a democracy than otherwise. Moreover, even if the best men are not available, democracy is good in the long run; at any rate, it is the least objectionable.

But it has to be remembered that democracy is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The end can only be the one for which the State exists. Political thinkers have given various reasons why, in their opinion, the existence of the State is necessary. According to Mahatmaji, and in his own way he endorses what many others, specially theologians, have said, the State exists to establish Ram Rajya, the kingdom of God on earth. To understand the real function of the State, one must understand the meaning of the individual's life. It must be clearly realised that the individual is not merely the part of a whole from which he derives his significance but is an entity which possesses its own intrinsic significance. As I have shown in great detail in my book *The Individual and the State*, the State has a meaning only in so far as it subserves the end of the individual, in so far as it is able to remove the obstacles to self-realisation, which is the goal, even though unconscious, of all individual effort. Democracy is one of the methods which the State employs to serve this end. As a matter of fact, this is the best method available. But democracy exists in several forms today. Even those systems of government which we are inclined to call dictatorships call themselves democracies and claim to be nearer to the spirit of democracy than the Western countries with all their

paraphernalia of election. Which of these forms shall we adopt?

Let us remember that the State has to provide food, clothing, housing, medical and educational facilities, old age and unemployment insurance — in fact, all those amenities which are recognised objectives of every civilised government. But man is not all body: his intellectual and, what is more important, his spiritual nature wants sustenance. This sustenance is not so much the addition to it of something from without as the removal of impediments to its unfoldment. And this, also, comes within the province of the State. Any form of democracy that is adopted must be adequate to this purpose or it will fail. There will be a blank, a vacuum, in the life of the individual, crying for satisfaction. Long-maintained neglect of this aspect of life will lead to mental and spiritual imbalance, the dabbling with all kinds of political and social theories all equally unsatisfying, cynicism and inner chaos, which is sure to be reflected, sooner or later in the external life of society.

Modern democratic theories start with two fetishes, that men want to govern themselves and that every man is fit to govern himself and others. Neither of these ideas is based on a proper appreciation of human psychology or history. Apart from matters of immediate concern such as are covered under the term 'Local Self-government', men are not so much anxious to take a direct hand in governing themselves as in seeing that they are well-governed. Good government, of course, means that inalienable human rights, rights which no government has conferred and no government may take away, shall be fully protected. It is also necessary that government should be amenable to control by the people through their representatives. But it is not necessary to have an endless round of elections or sessions of legislative bodies working round the seasons to manufacture an endless series of laws whose purport most of the members themselves do not understand.

We want an enlightened and highly educated citizenry, to be sure. It is only such a body of citizens which can

support a really democratic setup. But with all this, every citizen is hardly competent to take up office or to give a worthwhile opinion on the questions, many of them of great national and international importance, which come up before governments and legislatures for decision. And yet it is very often these questions which determine election results. I would not go so far as to agree with Bernard Shaw when he says that Lincoln's definition of democracy is "romantic nonsense" or with Nietzsche's description of it as "a degenerating form of political organisation", but would certainly urge that government of the people and for the people does not imply government by the people directly or through the medium of representatives who normally do not differ in ability from those who elect them. Some record of public service, some test of ability higher than bare literacy, should be a pre-requisite for election; and canvassing, direct or indirect, should be made a disqualification. In this connection, it would be worthwhile to examine the merits of a system of indirect elections. We all know that there have been men endowed with exceptional ability who have suddenly entered the stage of public business as if from nowhere and left their stamp on the pages of history for all time. Such exceptions will always be there, but rules cannot be framed with exceptions in view. There should be decentralisation at every stage; and leaders, the men chosen for high office, should be endowed with greater responsibility and given greater initiative to discharge it.

We need not have copied Western Constitutions blindly. All relevant questions should have been examined in the background of Indian traditions and experience. We could have evolved, and placed before the world, a new technique of democratic administration. Our failure to do so has made us heirs to all the drawbacks from which Western democracy is suffering and we are creating difficulties of our own, due to the incompatibility between our milieu and that in which the British Constitution has grown.

And it must be remembered that democracy is not only a technique; it is pre-eminently an attitude, a frame of mind.

This frame of mind can express itself in many ways but any weakening of it may lead to the collapse of the whole edifice of democracy. Instances are not unknown where the country's leadership has interfered with the working of the written constitution and imposed decisions of its own on subordinate bodies. Such instances are few but they may well be the straws which show which way the wind is blowing. Every such step was, no doubt, taken in good faith and may have been intrinsically justified in the public interest. But lesser men can treat these incidents as precedents. This will eventually lead to dictation under the garb of democracy. If the present type of democracy is to be maintained, there can be no room for imposition from above, hardly even for suggestion. Democracy carries with it the right to make mistakes.

Our democracy prides itself on being secular. Secularism, according to Chambers's *Dictionary*, is "the belief that the State, morals, education etc. should be independent of religion." Secularism, in this sense, is not an essential element of democracy. England is acknowledged to be the oldest existing democracy in the world but it has always maintained an established Church. Even today the king is the head of the Church and a number of heads of religious establishments, as such, have seats in Parliament. The United States is another great democracy. Their Declaration of Independence mentions God and in more than one public pronouncement the head of State refers to the Divinity. Only the other day, the papers flashed the news that the new President took the oath of office by swearing on the Bible. There have been, and will always be, individuals, laws unto themselves, whose ethics will not spring from the dictates of any religion. Even if there were a God, permitting or decreeing unethical conduct, they would defy Him. But such men are few. For the bulk of humanity, Religion has always been the greatest bulwark of morality. Reliance on Religion is not a sign of cowardice. The wellsprings of our noblest actions lie deep in that region of the self which can be probed only by Religion and to leave

the religious urge in man neglected or ignored is to court disaster. For some time, an individual or a whole nation may set up a political or economic theory as a fetish, giving to it the devotion which Religion demands, but such false gods have no vitality of their own and will one day tumble down of themselves. Religion lifts a man above himself, his petty self of likes and dislikes, and brings him into unison with those vital forces that pulsate through all that exists. It helps him to achieve at-one-ment with his own true self. Reliance on Religion, therefore, is to seek guidance from one's own self in its purest form. Such sublimation of self is not given to everyone and is not easy of achievement but any approach in that direction makes life cleaner, action less egotistical. To ignore Religion, to relegate it to the background, is folly. It is doubly foolish in a country like India. Our public men prattle about Buddha, more from political considerations than from conviction, they eulogise the *Gita* from the same motives, but, because Religion is taboo to them, they cannot help committing the sacrilege of twisting the meaning of the great teachers of old by tearing their words from the religious context in which they were uttered.

The allergy towards Religion displayed by many of our leaders is unfortunate. It is not necessary or even desirable for us to have a State religion. But the absence of a State religion does not justify that attitude of indifference, irritating patronage, disparagement, or ridicule which is adopted when the subject of Religion comes up. People who wish to retain the goodwill of those on high are afraid to confess their faith and the pity is that many an Indian scientist and scholar belongs to this category. To proclaim a faith in Religion requires courage, because Religion has come to be equated with superstition and all that is effete and reactionary. It is not at all surprising that the younger generation is growing up, lacking in faith, in reverence for anything that is even faintly spiritual, judging everything from the standard of the things of this world. It is not their fault, if these young men and women scoff at things of the spirit. We are not teaching them anything better. They will

listen to a Radhakrishnan, because his command over English attracts them and Philosophy, as a species of intellectual gymnastics, attracts them. We are unfair to these people and unfair to the nation in not recognising and emphasizing the place of Religion in human life.

Secularism, in the only sense in which it needs to be strictly enforced, has been known to India from the very beginning. Indian culture does not know of religious wars. And no one was debarred from the highest offices in the State because of his religious beliefs. The history of Buddhist rule and the Gupta empire bears this out as does the tradition which prevailed in the Indian States. Akbar appointed Hindus to some of the most important civil and military posts in his administration. All that is needed is recognition of this tradition and strict adherence to it.

XXIII

A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

THE COMPLAINT is often heard that some of the best-thought-out schemes of the government do not arouse that enthusiasm in the public mind which they intrinsically deserve. Partly, we can ascribe this to the inertia and conservatism of the Indian mind which is slow to grasp and act upon new ideas and which has not yet been able to extricate itself from the '*ma-bap*' attitude which expects government to do everything. We can also, with justification, put some share of the responsibility for this state of affairs on the officials who are not able to secure public co-operation because of their wooden approach, a hang-over from British rule. But this is not the whole of the story. Anyone who is not satisfied merely with finding scapegoats and wants to probe deeper into the causes of public apathy will have to take account of a number of other factors. He cannot help noticing that the Congress is not attracting young men to its ranks. Apart from job-hunters, the younger generation is attracted to the Jan Sangh and the Communist Party. There must be reasons for this. There was a time, barely two decades ago, when young men flocked to the standard of the Congress, ready to undergo any suffering, prepared for any sacrifice. That channel has well-nigh dried up. The current now flows another way.

The world of students in college and university — and this is by far the most important section of the younger generation — is in a state of ferment. Every day, we hear of acts of indiscipline and rowdiness. We of the older generation cannot help thinking of the good old days when we were students. Indiscipline, demonstrations, hartals and breaches of the peace were unknown then. But those days are not to be brought back by wishful thinking and nostalgic regrets. There must be reasons for all this unrest. The student today is not cursed with more than his share of original sin.

He is essentially as good a specimen of humanity as students of his age anywhere else. In some respects, he is better than we were: his sympathies are wider. He is what he is because circumstances have made him such.

The social milieu in which he lives is changing fast. Some of the changes are being brought about by hasty legislation. But the result is that the social fabric is breaking up and social sanctions have ceased to be effective. As an example, one may take the joint family system. With its dispersal, the obligations it imposed are being less and less recognised and members of weaker branches of the family tree are being increasingly subjected to worries to which people like them were strangers a generation ago. It is seldom that the older and younger member of the family live together long enough, with the result that reverence to age and service of elders are becoming rare social virtues. The conferment of property rights on women has introduced a further element of discord. While formerly the elder brother inherited his father's obligations to bring up and marry off his younger sister, he is now beginning to look upon her as a rival, with the result that a girl has to look after her interests in a society which is not fully prepared for this. Our educational system does not recognise the existence of Religion, except as a nuisance. Religious sanctions have, therefore, ceased to have any meaning.

The economic situation is highly disturbing. A young boy or girl in his or her early teens begins to realise the financial difficulties which parents have to face. There is acute awareness of the sacrifices which they have to make everyday to keep a son or daughter at college. And there is no guarantee of employment at the end of the educational career. The number of those seeking admission to educational institutions is rising by leaps and bounds but employment facilities are not keeping pace. Added to this is the fact that the age when marriage can be safely entered into is fast outstripping the physiological age of marriage. Torn by a hundred worries and subject to a number of psychoses, the young man indulges in activity, the wilder, the better,

to drown his cares and allow him to evade coming face to face with himself.

Such a state of affairs can neither be ignored nor wished away. Steady, persistent, effort will have to be made simultaneously on all fronts. Such effort will have to be carefully planned and it must be recognised that planned effort entails hardship, self-restraint, sacrifice and faith. We have, it can be urged, taken up planning on a vast scale and are demanding of the people to show that enthusiasm, that faith and spirit of sacrifice, which is essential to the success of planning. The nation can function on this high level. We gave ample evidence of this in our wars of independence, not so long ago. But, somehow, our appeal now does not evoke the proper response. We come back to where we began this chapter.

Let us examine the goal for which we are asking people to strive. Ours, we say, is a Welfare State and we want to secure the nation's welfare. This word may have a variety of meanings but, whenever we use it, we speak in terms of food, clothing, housing and other material equipments of life. That all this is necessary cannot be doubted. Every government, even the most dictatorial, seeks to provide it to its citizens or subjects. Men can work hard to achieve these objectives and fight one another for them, but no revolution has ever been centred on bread and the things for which it stands. Men can willingly sacrifice all that they hold dear, their lives included, only when they are identified with something higher than themselves. It is only when man is inspired by the faith of an evangelist, when he has the sense of a mission, that he forgets himself. The Congress worker of 1921-42 was not fighting for anything material; he was not expecting any tangible results from the sufferings that he was inviting upon himself. He was fighting for Independence. Today, there is no such goal before him. Canals and roads and schools, houses and bread and motor cars, are all very desirable but they are too earthy to touch the spiritual in man. One might as well ask a man to lift himself by his shoe-strings. There is a corollary to this which is no

less dangerous. There can be no competition in striving to reach an ideal but the material things of life have been the prizes which come as rewards to him who beats his competitors down. This has been true, in human history to date, of individuals as well as States. When people are asked to work for predominantly material objectives, this competition and reward mentality comes to the forefront. This slows down the tempo of effort.

This is the rock on which most of our schemes founder. We have not been able to provide an incentive for selfless work. This is particularly unfortunate in an age when a large number of ideologies are competing for public attention. It is absurd to imagine that we can beat down an ideology with bread, quinine and fans in third-class compartments.

Every political party is watching the scene and is aware of the discontent which prevails among the younger people. When people are worried, almost any change seems welcome. The subconscious conviction is there that, even if there is no improvement, things cannot be worse than they are today. Some of these parties march under the banner of definite ideologies. In the ideological vacuum in the mind of youth, a vacuum which the Congress makes no attempt to fill, one or other of the doctrines presented to him finds a lodgment. From then on, his life becomes dedicated to a cause at whose feet he will be prepared to lay his all. This is why certain political parties are attracting young men, who find the Congress a dull and soulless organisation.

Some of us have been urging the Congress leadership to pay attention to this very important matter. We have been suggesting that some of them should sit down and think out a philosophic basis for our individual and communal effort. The Communist wants to change the world and to evolve a higher type of humanity. Whatever he attempts to do for his country or the smaller group to which he immediately belongs, it is part of the great mission to transform the world. There is no Divine spark in man; nonetheless, the Communist will help every man to conquer

his lower self and act as a free, responsible, altruistic individual. He will provide everyone with the opportunity to rise to the highest level of his capacity and he will abolish all exploitation and egoistical possession. He will bring the Kingdom of God down to earth, even though there is no God.

And what do we propose to do? Carry out a few reforms here and there, leaving the world very much as it is. This, surely, is unworthy of us, with our great ideals and traditions and our noble philosophy, unworthy of the countrymen of Mahatma Gandhi. Surely, we should have a pre-vision of the world as we would like it to be. This is the atomic age, as we all fondly remind ourselves and man may soon be reaching out to other habitable planets. Do we want him to go there, with all his greeds and hatreds and jealousies, to convert them into shambles? If not, cannot we place before humanity an idea of the kind of being we should like the man of tomorrow to be? The Indja of old had a name for its ideal man — *Arya*. We may choose another name if we will, but define our concept of the *Arya*. Let us try to root out all that is un-Arya, unworthy. Old Indian culture had before it the concept of the *Virāt Purusa*. All that exists, living as well as non-living, forms part of the corpus of the *Virāt Purusa*, the manifested God. They are all organically connected with one another, deriving sustenance from the same source, influencing one another for weal or woe. The highest gods, the humblest viruses — all are thus indissolubly interlinked, completely interdependent. Who then shall harm whom? To try to injure another is to throw a boomerang which is bound to recoil on one's own head sooner or later.

Surely, this is a noble concept, a great cementing idea. From this follows the corollary that insistence on rights is wrong and leads to friction. Insistence on duties on the other hand knows no conflicts. And this is the essence of *Dharma*. *Dharma* is not religion: it is much more. Even an atheist can follow the path of *Dharma*. Belief in God is not necessary but faith in the existence of a Something that is

the substratum of all that exists, that is immanent in us all, that gives a meaning and a significance to the lowliest among us, that is True, Good, Beautiful, such a faith is necessary. Such a faith and the type of action and the attitudes that flow from it is India's contribution to world culture, to universal Peace.

I wish our leadership would give up fighting shy of philosophy. It is philosophy alone that can give coherence to Education, Law, Politics, Ethics and International Conduct. It is philosophy alone that will lift our youth from the mental morass in which it finds itself and release those energies which will vitalise all our efforts. It will give an ideal worth living for and dying for. Work will cease to be drudgery, because it will be part of a *Yajna*, a sacred ceremony, for the transformation of this world into a true Ramrajya. The *Vedas* say *Kṛṇudhvam Vishvamāryam* — make the whole world Arya. What nobler goal can be placed before anyone?

It is being increasingly recognised that there is need for emotional integration. The government of India are appointing a Committee to suggest ways and means to bring about such integration. We have woken up none too soon. The great defect in the bringing up of our youth is that there is no room in it for emotion. The appeal is to the cold intellect and the possessive, the ego-centric, instincts. There is no attempt to raise them to the level of identification with anything higher than the self. Some enthusiasm, some amount of emotion is spontaneously roused by reports of events on our frontiers but it is not encouraged and dies out.

XXIV

PLANNING FOR THE VILLAGE

APOTHEOSIS of the village is one of the ruling political fashions of the day. It is by no means a new craze. It was adopted some decades ago but it has undergone a number of embellishments in recent years. The villager is looked upon as a paragon of many virtues, a simple, large-hearted, frusting and trustworthy man; unlettered, perhaps, but immersed in the best traditions of Indian culture, deeply religious, tolerant and instinctively fair-minded. There is another side to this picture, of course. There are those who look upon him as an ultra-conservative and reactionary, a man who does not understand his own interests, a prey to superstition, caste-ridden, whom nothing but violent shock treatment will bring to a sense of the realities of the changing world around him.

The Indian villager is not merely the subject of an academic psychological or sociological study. The Planning Commission and the Central and State legislatures are laying down plans and enacting legislation in which he is the pivotal figure. Unless there is a clear conception of what he is and what he stands for and the environment in which he lives and works, the result may well be entirely different from what everyone intends.

It is an unfounded aspersion to look upon the average resident of the village as an unintelligent person incapable of recognising where his own interests lie. The difficulty is that many of his mentors do not understand him or his problems. He has inherited a splendid tradition of farming methods suited to the conditions that have prevailed in the country for centuries and he is willing to work hard. It is true that conditions are changing and he will have to revise his techniques. He is eager to do so if the advantages of a change are clearly brought home to him. But it is really fortunate that he does not change his ways with every

passing whim that seizes politicians and administrators with little experience of field conditions, on the strength of a brief visit abroad or a newspaper article about what is supposed to be happening in some foreign country. Progressiveness in this sense might spell chaos and ruin. He possesses the normal instincts and prejudices of peasants all the world over and is no more willing to surrender his land to a collective farm than peasants anywhere else. Many countries which had gone over to collectivisation seem to be feeling the need for a revision of their agricultural policies. But our farmer is not at all averse to co-operation, if he can be assured that it is not intended to be a half-way house to collectivisation. His weather-lore is not pure science: it contains much over-generalisation but it is not pure nonsense either. In any case, if he is not more science-minded, it is because science has not been so far brought to him in a more digestible form. And he is fast changing as literacy increases. Even without being literate, he tries to derive the fullest advantage from better seeds and manures and agricultural implements. He is more caste-ridden than his opposite number in the town, to some extent, but the castes come more in contact with one another in the country than they do in the town. Agricultural operations would be impossible without the Brahman and the Chamar fully co-operating with each other. The *Katha*, the festivals and bazaars, the threshing-floor, the wrestling bouts, the vagaries of the weather — all these provide a hundred more intimate topics of sympathetic conversation and platforms of general contact than does the sophisticated and exclusive life of the city.

But with all this, the man in the village is not an angel. He is not more altruistic than other people and will commit a crime with as much eagerness as a man from the city, should his interests or his passions dictate such a course of action. Any planning or legislation based on the foundations of a figment of the imagination will founder on the rocks of unreality.

It must be realised clearly that the Indian village of old does not exist. It is dead and there is little chance of its

resurrection. The circumstances in which it flourished no longer exist and nobody intends to revive them. In the older days, each village was something like a small republic. In the times of powerful empires like the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Cholas and the Moghuls, the king's writ ran through the whole realm and his armies ensured protection from the aggressor from outside. The village willingly paid into the king's treasury what was due to him. When the empires broke up, the village was thrown very much on its own resources for defence and the payment of revenue was spasmodic and enforced. But in either case, the administration was very much decentralised—no judicial hierarchy, no organised police and no legislative factory for new and ever new laws. The village thus tended to become a small republic, not organically connected with other republics of the same type, both politically and economically as self-sufficient as it was possible for units of a civilized society to be. That isolation has now gone. There is a hierarchy in every sphere — the police, the magistracy, the judiciary.

Economic self-sufficiency is also a thing of the past. We may speak about the revival of cottage industries and extend patronage to the products of village handicrafts. But the cloth mills and the sugar factories are there all the same. There are the steel mills being set up at Bhilai and Durgapur. Young men, and young women also, go to schools and colleges in the cities. The prices of farm-produce have gone up and there is more money in the village. Who shall dictate to the village that its residents shall not change their tastes and not go in for silk and nylon, not have radios in their homes, not use Flex and Bata shoes? All these things come from the cities, as do the bicycles and torches which have almost become necessities of village life.

Grave changes of a social nature are also taking place and the pace is being forced by recent legislation. Formerly, travel was a rare event in life, except for a pilgrimage. Now the villager's son travels to places hundreds of miles from his home in search of employment. In this way, he not only earns money, but acquires new tastes and sheds off a good

many of his prejudices, as a result of contacts with people from many parts of the country professing different faiths and speaking many languages. The joint family system is breaking up fast. Younger members of the family must leave the village if they want to lead decent lives. Naturally, their ties with the village grow weak. Again, the political setup which we have evolved has taken away the importance of the family and places emphasis on the individual citizen.

All this and much more along the same lines had undermined the village as a unit. It is a geographical expression and a link in the administrative chain but its personality is irretrievably lost. The ties which connect its residents, one to the other, are weak and it hardly fills any vacuum in their lives. It cannot, therefore, exact the same loyalty from them as it did in the past or evoke the same emotions. And this state of affairs will continue. There seems little chance of our effecting a revolution in our lives and going back to the kind of life we had centuries ago, in a world which is going the other way at an increasingly fast pace.

Let us keep this in mind when legislating for the village. We may have Panchayats by all means but they will not be what the Panchayats of the past were. The camouflage of non-political elections may be maintained by the tacit consent of all parties and caste and religious prejudices may sway the scales. But political alignments cannot be avoided. The political parties which want to run the government cannot afford to ignore villages which after all contain their voters. Village elections are bound to be linked up with the larger state-wise and country-wise elections. There are no strong village interests which can keep the people united and prove superior to political divisions. An element of disruption will thus be introduced which will still further undermine the integrity of the village. Naturally, such disruption makes itself felt more acutely in small units.

I am not passing any judgment on present tendencies: my purpose is only to draw attention to the probable effects of our action. It might be worthwhile to reflect on what kind of India we visualise for the future. Do we want to obliterate

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the distinction between town and country by making the country a pale replica of the town and throw it into the maelstrom of party politics and bossism or can we think out some way of retaining and reconciling the best in both and lifting the life of society to some higher plane? Haphazard planning, taking the various sections of corporate life in isolation, may lead to chaotic conditions in the end. Let us first form a picture of the nation's life as we would like it to be and then proceed, through education and legislation, to achieve that end.

XXV

SOME OF MY FADS

THIS BOOK would be incomplete, I feel, without a mention of some of my fads. They have been publicly noticed, more than once, and commented upon, favourably or otherwise, by a variety of critics. The most charitably-minded look upon them as amiable weaknesses of an otherwise fairly intelligent man; others, of course, find in them a powerful evidence of my reactionary mind, which clings to old superstitions dating back to the bullock-cart age, long since dead. There are some, on the other hand, who find in me a champion of all that is ancient, all that presentday Hinduism is supposed to stand for. The opinions of those who draw their inspiration from what they consider to be advanced western thought do not impress me unduly, nor have I the ambition to stand as the champion of obscurantism. Both my critics and defenders are unfair to me.

What I have stated in a previous chapter in connection with secularism is an indication of my views about Religion. It is my conviction that the relegation of Religion to the background is dangerous for the individual and for society. To defend Religion is not necessarily the same thing as to defend any existing religious system, any set of dogmas. But to create an atmosphere in which there is no reverence for something spiritual which is in Nature and yet transcends it, in which the profession of religious faith is taboo in polite society, and religion becomes something like necromancy, to be practised, if at all, in stealth — to do this is to do positive harm to society. I know that Hinduism today has strayed very far from its old moorings. There have been many harmful accretions and much that was of value has drained away. Blind prejudice, formalism and hypocrisy has taken the place of living faith and, from his conduct, the Hindu demonstrates that he considers his gods to be more unclean and unintelligent than he himself is. But

with all this, the living spark is there still. A hundred weeds have not been able to stop the flow of the clear spiritual waters which came down to earth with the hymns of the *R̥g Veda*, thousands of years ago. If there are defects which have crept into Hinduism — and I have mercilessly criticised them — they cannot be removed by denunciations from outside. It is work from within that will regenerate and purify Hinduism. I profess my Hinduism openly and am proud to be a Hindu. Because I am a Hindu, I can show due respect to other religions, as my religion teaches me:

Ekam Sat, Viprā bahudhā vadanti

The Truth (the True Substance which is the basis of all existence) is one: the wise call it by many names.

I am a voracious reader of science fiction and one of my fads is interest in Space Travel. Some time ago, I placed a sum of Rs. 2,000 at the disposal of the National Academy of Sciences to be given as a prize to any Indian Scientist who made an original contribution to any branch of Science or Technology connected with the subject. Another of my harmless fads is soil-less cultivation. I carried out extensive experiments in this connection, growing flowers and vegetables in such unorthodox soils as dry sand, broken bricks and coal-dust. In every case, they thrived and proved better than the control plants grown in ordinary soil. I have already referred to a third fad of mine, Astrology. The taste for this subject still remains with me. My telescope is a great help to my star-gazing. When I took up the idea of setting up an observatory in Uttar Pradesh, the Government of India to whom I applied for financial assistance, were, to say the least, very cold. They were thinking of setting up an observatory of their own and could not think of any reason why a State Government should go in for anything of the kind. But the observatory at Naini Tal has made its mark and found an honourable niche for itself among the observatories of the world. This is a source of great personal satisfaction to me.

But I have now approached dangerous ground. Astronomy is orthodox but Astrology is not and I have publicly asserted my faith in Astrology. I have ventured to say emphatically that it is a science, not a perfect science because no branch of knowledge based on observation and inference can be perfect, but a science nonetheless. Because patients die, no one thinks of erasing the name of medicine from the list of genuine sciences. And it has not yet been established that astrologers make more mistakes than medical men. The unfortunate fact is that many of us have not been able to shake off the slave mentality with which foreign rule endowed us. Because Astrology is at the moment unfashionable in the West, we frown upon it. And what is more unfortunate is the fact that many of us, educated Indians, have become moral cowards. The Prime Minister is bitterly opposed to Astrology; he loses no opportunity to ridicule it and those who believe in it. Therefore, people who consider themselves educated will not confess their faith in it, even though they consult astrologers on the sly. This makes Astrology something clandestine, something to be ashamed of. The astrologer does not occupy a place of respect and astrology is denied that patronage which is so necessary for the development of every branch of knowledge. It is no wonder that quacks flourish in such an intellectual climate. They can afford to make irresponsible statements because they have no reputation to lose. And then, having brought Astrology down to such a low level, we have the effrontery to turn round and condemn it. If an astrologer happens to make a correct forecast, we attribute this to intelligent anticipation or mere chance. It is no part of our business to apply the law of statistical averages and see what percentage of the astrologer's forecasts turn out to be correct. We refuse to do so, because we are afraid that, if we did, our pet theories of intelligent guess and sheer luck would fall to the ground.

People who see me defending Astrology take it for granted that I must be an astrologer. I am nothing of the kind and have not studied even one of the textbooks on the subject.

But that does not prevent me from having faith in Astrology. How many of us have personally studied the life of a filterable virus? How many persons have an intelligent grasp of Einstein's Theory of Relativity? But surely this does not stand in the way of our having faith in Biology, Medicine, Physics or Mathematics. Our general intellectual appreciation, aided by tangible results of the application of such theories, are sufficient to give us reasonable grounds for our belief.

The question is often put to me, how can astrology be a science? How can the stars influence human life? The use of the word 'stars' is a mistake, though a very common one. The astrologer does not as a rule deal directly with the stars, he studies the movements of the planets. Stars come into the picture, only because the planets move against the background of the stars which constitute the Zodiacal signs. But this is a minor matter. As regards the main question, let me point out that it is thoroughly unscientific to ask it. No one who has any pretensions to a knowledge of science would venture to put it in any other sphere. Science does not waste its time in answering hypothetical questions. The number of such questions can be infinite. Science starts with a number of verifiable facts and then tries to find a hypothesis which will explain them by showing them to be connected by some uniform principle, which does not violate other principles binding together other groups of phenomena. Once the connecting law has been discovered, it should help to foretell the occurrence of other events of the same kind. But if there are no firm data, no verifiable facts to start with, the quest for an explanation would not arise. If apples and stones did not fall to the ground when thrown up and planets did not revolve round the sun in accordance with Kepler's laws, Newton would not have bothered to discover the Law of Gravitation, for there would have been nothing to explain. Do those people who ask such questions accept the facts on which the astrologer relies? Do they admit that there is a relationship of the kind posited by the astrologer between human affairs and planetary movements?

If they do, they are entitled to an explanation. If the explanation given by the orthodox astrologer does not satisfy them, they are free to think of another. A wrong theory or the absence of one will not alter facts. Quinine will continue to cure Malaria even though no one may understand exactly how it does so. But if the facts themselves are not admitted, there can be no case for an explanation. I need not discuss the philosophy of astrology here but no astrologer need waste his time over answering hypothetical questions. Let him rather collect facts and show by irrefutable evidence that there is a solid foundation on which the edifice of his science rests.

The most sensible thing would be to test the truth of Astrology on thoroughly scientific lines, to which no astrologer can possibly object. Astrology is not an occult science: like Medicine, it stands or falls by objective, tangible facts and these can easily be investigated in the course of a decade or so in a suitably endowed institute. The results would be worth the outlay. If the research justifies the claims of Astrology, the science should receive the fullest encouragement, so that it may be made a much more efficient instrument for the service of man. If, on the other hand, it is proved false, no efforts would be too great to stamp out the belief in it from the popular mind. Incalculable harm is done every day to individual and national interests by people listening to the astrologer's words, if these words are based on ignorance and hypocrisy.

In a previous chapter, I have referred to the fact that in the U.P. Scheme of Basic Education, an important place was given to Art. It is my conviction that we are not paying to the Arts the attention that they deserve. Arts form one of the alternate courses of study in certain classes. Obviously, such study is meant for those who, for one reason or other, want to specialise in one or more of the arts. But Art is more than a mere subject of study for the would-be specialist, much more than a key to a diploma. It is, or, at any rate, should be, a part of life. Our lives are very drab. The aesthetic part of our natures is starved. Poetry, Painting,

Music, even the humble art of story-telling, have no place in the lives of most of us. The educated Indian either talks shop or cheap politics as a change from cheap scandal. The cinema has invaded even the villages and is debasing our musical taste, while playing havoc with our cultural and ethical standards and our codes of good manners. The rapid growth of cities without wide, open spaces is shutting the people off from all contact with nature. The flower bursting into bloom, the lotus opening its petals to the rising sun, the song of the early bird, are not for us. Even poetry is written under an electric lamp over a cup of tea. The moon is there, so are the stars, but who looks at them? We do not encourage in the young the habit of observing Nature. There is no conception of Beauty, that Beauty which Nature provides everywhere as a living evidence of the existence of that Divine hand which made it. I have striven in my own humble way to bring home to everyone, particularly to teachers, the great necessity of developing the aesthetic side of the younger generation, if we want them to grow up into whole, integrated, personalities. I can only hope that other, and more influential, hands will take this up.

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